

Longmans' Class-Books of English Literature

A BOOK OF SELECTIONS

FROM

THE WRITINGS OF
R. L. STEVENSON

*COLLECTED AND EDITED WITH
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES*

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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S. G. DUNN.

ALLAHABAD,

July, 1915.

INTRODUCTION

“THE whole tale of my life is better to me than any poem,” wrote Stevenson in one of his letters. He was thinking then of his adventurous voyaging among the islands of the South Seas, and of the perpetual challenge to a keen enjoyment which the varied scenes of beauty and danger aroused in him. But the words may well be applied to the whole story of his life as we learn it now from the pages of his own books and the lips of those who knew him. There are some writers whose works we are content to read without ever asking what manner of men they were who wrote them ; there are some, indeed, whose lives it is better for us to forget ; but there are others of whom we may say that the life and the work alike claim our interest for their nobility and excellence, and whom we may admire for being what they were as well as for doing what they did. Of these is Robert Louis Stevenson. The most romantic of writers, he made of his life, too, a true romance ; the most conscientious of artists, he showed himself throughout a connoisseur of deeds no less than of words ; a lover of colour and beauty in the world of the imagination, he kept in the ordinary affairs of life his zest for fine action and generous conduct. A keen interest in all kinds of existence and a quick sympathy with all living things ; a strong faculty of enjoyment, and a freshness of invention which ever added to the pleasure of the moment ; a gaiety and

courage preserved and manifested during the most depressing experiences of ill-health and fortune; a deep sense of the importance of the apparently trivial and a conviction of an abiding purpose to be found in the "tangled web" of human life;—these are the qualities which we may most clearly perceive in him, and for these alone it would be worth while to know him. Fortunately, this is possible for even the dullest of us, for hardly any one has ever possessed in such a measure as Stevenson the gift of self-expression, combined with such frankness in the use of it. He tells us most intimately his thoughts and feelings; he recalls for us most vividly and faithfully the experiences of his life; he is one of those who do not forget, and who has learned to "speak out." This gives a charm to every word that Stevenson wrote; we feel that we are listening to the man himself, and that he is speaking sincerely and freely with us. Therefore the best biography of Stevenson is in his books, and from them alone can we hope to know the man. Here but the briefest outline of his life may be given by way of introduction to his own words.

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh on November 13th, 1850. His father, Thomas Stevenson, was a scientific engineer and belonged to a family of engineers. His chief work lay in the construction of lighthouses and the perfecting of the revolving lights used in them. He sailed, in the way of his profession, round the rugged coasts of Scotland, and it was from him undoubtedly, and from the early association with his work, that the son took that love of the sea and the adventurous life of sea-faring men which was to be so characteristic of him. There was, too, in the father the same love of words and the same delight in conversation as

appeared later in the son. Here is Stevenson's own account of him, and from it we may judge the force of heredity. "His talk, compounded of so much sterling sense and so much freakish humour, and clothed in language so apt, droll, and emphatic, was a perpetual delight to all who knew him before the clouds began to settle on his mind. His use of language was both just and picturesque; and when at the beginning of his illness he began to feel the ebbing of this power, it was strange and painful to hear him reject one word after another as inadequate, and at length desist from the search and leave his phrase unfinished rather than finish it without propriety." Stevenson's mother belonged to the family of Balfours, and her father was minister at Colinton. Here Stevenson spent part of his boyhood, and from this side of the family he inherited that interest in religion and ethics which was never far from the surface in all he wrote. When he was small, his mother read to him, and it is to her influence very largely we may attribute his early delight in literature. Unfortunately, he inherited from her and her family the weakness of constitution, and especially the tendency to lung trouble, which made his life a continual struggle for health. As a child he was often so ill that his life was despaired of. "Many winters I never crossed the threshold; but used to lie on my face on the nursery floor, chalking or painting in water-colours the pictures in the illustrated newspapers." This imprisonment in the house and inevitable separation from other children fostered in him the imaginative faculties; he was obliged to amuse himself, and developed a capacity for play which stood him, later, in good stead. The companionship of his old nurse, Alison Cunningham,

was a great influence upon him. She used to tell him stories of old Scotland, of the Covenanters and the ancient struggles of religion. He began to take an interest in the history of his native land, and under her guidance learned to know and love the Bible as interpreted by the preachers of Scotland. As early as 1856, his mother tells us, "it was the desire of his heart to be an author," and all through his boyhood it was the same. "Even then," says one of his school-fellows, "he had a fixed idea that literature was his calling, and a marvellously mature conception of the course of self-education through which he required to put himself in order to succeed." What this "course" was we may read in the present volume.

But if he delighted in reading and spent much of his time in trying to write, he was still a true boy, fond of games and the varied life of the open air. One of his teachers records of him, "He was without exception the most delightful boy I ever knew; full of fun, full of tender feeling; ready for his lessons, ready for a story, ready for fun." A good many of the subjects taught at school did not interest him; his attitude towards them may be found in "An Apology for Idlers." When he was twelve years old, his mother's health began to fail, and it was necessary for her to spend the winter in the milder climate of the Continent. Stevenson went with her, and soon acquired that taste for travel which was to make him a "nomad, more or less," all his days. The year 1866 witnessed his first venture as a printed author with "The Pentland Rising: a Page of History," published anonymously at Edinburgh. Here for the next few years he studied at the University. It was intended that he should follow the ways of his family and become an engineer, but it

was soon evident that he disliked the work. In 1871 he felt compelled to tell his father that he could persevere no longer; he wanted to be an author, and was allowed to have his will, on condition that he read for the Scottish Bar as well, in case he failed in his chosen profession. He now began, he says, to be happy. He made many friends and enjoyed wandering about with them in search of adventures. He delighted in new experiences and saw many sides of life. To books he owed much at this time—"the years for reading," as he writes of them later. Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" especially moved him, "a book of singular service," as he calls it, "which tumbled the world upside down for me, blew into space a thousand cobwebs of genteel and ethical illusions, and, having thus shaken my tabernacle of lies, set me back upon a strong foundation of all the original and manly virtues." In 1875 he was called to the Bar and was set free from study in Edinburgh. He had already paid many visits and made many journeys, and now he spent the greater part of his time in France. The little colony of painters at Barbizon was especially dear to him. "That noiseless hamlet lying close among the borders of the wood is for me, as for so many others, a green spot in memory." Nearly all his essays at this time are concerned with travel and the impressions of travel. Not till 1877 did he publish any fiction, his first story being "A Lodging for the Night," an incident in the life of Villon. It was on his return from that canoe trip chronicled in "An Inland Voyage," that he first met the American lady, Mrs. Osbourne, who had come to France from California to educate her family there. He fell in love with her at once; a new chapter in his life was opened. On

her return to California, he tried to console himself with work ; but on the news of her illness he could stay in England no longer. In August, 1879, he sailed for New York as an ordinary emigrant, much against the wishes of his friends. The discomforts of the voyage, and the long train journey to San Francisco, weakened his strength, and for some time he was very near to death. When ill and out of spirits, he chanced to come across two books of Herman Melville on the South Seas, and from these he first caught the fascination of those "ultimate islands" which were to receive him in a lasting home. But it was a time of much stress for him. He had little money ; his health was bad ; his work did not seem to be succeeding. Yet, "however ill he might be," wrote one of his friends afterwards, "or however anxious had been his vigils, he was always gay, eloquent, and boyish, with the peculiar youthfulness of spirit that was destined to last him to the end." But the dawn was breaking. Mrs. Osbourne obtained a divorce from her husband, and was able to come and nurse him slowly back to comparative health. His father made him an allowance of £250 a year, and consented to his marriage. In 1880 this took place, and henceforward Stevenson could rejoice in the companionship of "a character as strong, interesting, and romantic as his own." They returned to Scotland and Stevenson's family, but not to settle down. Stevenson's health was still bad, and the doctors recommended a winter in the Alps. Davos was chosen, but neither Stevenson nor his wife liked the life there.

A move was made to the Riviera, and at Hyères for nearly a year Stevenson was happier, he says, than ever before or since. There was something in

the warmth and colour of the south that appealed especially to his spirit. "I live," he writes, "in a most sweet corner of the universe, sea and fine hills before me, and a rich variegated plain; and at my back a craggy hill, loaded with vast feudal ruins. I am very quiet; a person passing by my door half startles me; but I enjoy the most aromatic airs, and at night the most wonderful view into a moonlit garden . . . Angels I know frequent it; and it thrills all night with the flutes of silence."

But he was not to enjoy this Paradise for long. A sudden chill brought on congestion of the lungs, and he very nearly died. As soon as he was better he returned to England for medical advice, and for three years, 1884-1887—his last in Europe—he lived at Bournemouth. Here in the intervals of sickness he worked hard with growing success, and when too ill for work, bore his sufferings with an extraordinary courage and gaiety. He never indulged in the self-pity of the invalid, nor lost interest in the pleasures of his friends; even in the sick-room, lying still for days together, he was never bored. He could play like a child when all else failed him, and was wont to comfort himself for this sedentary life with visions of adventure in far distant lands. The death of his father in 1887 was a great blow to him. Father and son had been in these last years drawn closer together, and all misunderstanding between them had cleared quite away. There was now no longer any reason why Stevenson should stay in England; his mother was ready to accompany him in search of health, and they went accordingly to the United States. They tried a place in the Adirondack mountains which had been recently recommended for consumptives, but it was too cold

for a permanent residence. Stevenson's mind turned with longing to the South Seas of which he had read, and in June, 1888, he and his party set sail from San Francisco in the *Casco* for a cruise in the Eastern and Central Pacific. This life of wandering from island to island exactly suited his romantic temperament. He wrote in one of his letters, "This climate; these voyagings; these landfalls at dawn; new islands peaking from the morning bank; new forested harbours; new passing alarms of squalls and surf; new interests of gentle natives—the whole tale of my life is better to me than any poem." He was in a new world, and was delighted with every experience. His sympathy and tolerance won him friends wherever he went, not least among the natives. Many a stalwart chief regarded him as a "brother," and mourned at his departure from some brief visit. The climate seemed to renew his health and the excitement of travel was a perpetual stimulus. "Life is far better fun," he thought, "than people dream who fall asleep among the chimney-stacks and telegraph wires."

On one of these voyages, Stevenson touched at Apia in Upolu, the chief island of the Samoan group, and here he purchased some land. The idea was to build a cottage for temporary residence in the intervals of cruising, but in 1891 he decided to settle down in his own house, and at last his wanderings were at an end. His voyages among the islands had taught him much about the ways of the people; his natural kindness and gaiety endeared him to them, and he lived at Vailima for the remaining three years of his life as a kind of chieftain of the patriarchal type. He was able to do many things of which he could only dream in Europe, and he was elated by his new

vigour. "It is like a fairy story," he writes, "that I should have recovered liberty and strength, and should go round again among my fellow-men, boating, riding, bathing, toiling hard with a wood-knife in the forest." His life was now full of variety. Much of the day was spent in laborious work upon his books, writing and re-writing to satisfy his acute sense of form; the rest he spent in the open air on the work of his estate or in consultation with the many visitors who came to him. His letters to friends in England are delightful descriptions of his home and of the life of the island. His stories, such as "The Beach of Falesa," convey very subtly the fascination of the South Seas, while in "A Footnote to History" and his letters to the *Times* he contributes materially to the political history of that region. He was happy in the companionship of his family and their relatives, yet he could not but feel the separation from his native land and the intellectual influences of literary friends. His letters seem to indicate, in 1893, an increasing depression of spirit. The truth is plain now: he was working too hard, much in the same way and from much the same motive, as Scott at Abbotsford, and his fragile health was breaking under the strain. On the 3rd of December, 1894, he passed quietly away, surrounded by his family and faithful servants. His grave is on the hill behind his house, and on it are inscribed his own verses:—

"Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

"This be the verse you grave for me;
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill."

Now that, twenty years later, his countrymen have come into the possession of his chosen island, may the memory of Tusitala, the sweet teller of tales, as his native friends called him, be an inspiration and encouragement to those whose task it is to govern the races he loved and understood so well. Let them recall the words of the old chief at his funeral: "We were in prison, and he cared for us. We were sick, and he made us well. We were hungry, and he fed us. The day was no longer than his kindness. You are great people and full of love." To-day the British Empire is on its trial. Other ideals than ours are struggling for supremacy. Let us meet the conflict in the spirit of Stevenson: "The world has no room for cowards. We must all be ready somehow to toil, to suffer, to die."

S. G. DUNN.

ALLAHABAD.

July, 1915.

A BOOK OF SELECTIONS

FROM THE

WRITINGS OF R. L. STEVENSON

I

A NIGHT AMONG THE PINES

(Travels with a Donkey)

FROM Bleymard after dinner, although it was already late, I set out to scale a portion of the Lozère. An ill-marked stony drove-road guided me forward; and I met nearly half a dozen bullock-carts descending from the woods, each laden with a whole pine-tree for the winter's firing. At the top of the woods, which do not climb very high upon this cold ridge, I struck leftward by a path among the pines, until I hit on a dell of green turf, where a streamlet made a little spout over some stones to serve me for a water-tap. "In a more sacred or sequestered bower . . . nor nymph nor faunus haunted." The trees were not old, but they grew thickly round the glade: there was no outlook, except north-eastward upon distant hill-tops, or straight upward to the sky; and the encampment felt secure and private like a room. By the time I had made my arrangements and fed Modestine, the day was already beginning to decline. I buckled myself to the knees into my sack and made a hearty

meal ; and as soon as the sun went down I pulled my cap over my eyes and fell asleep.

Night is a dead monotonous period under a roof : but in the open world it passes lightly, with its stars and dews and perfumes, and the hours are marked by changes in the face of Nature. What seems a kind of temporal death to people choked between walls and curtains, is only a light and living slumber to the man who sleeps afield. All night long he can hear Nature breathing deeply and freely ; even as she takes her rest, she turns and smiles ; and there is one stirring hour unknown to those who dwell in houses, when a wakeful influence goes abroad over the sleeping hemisphere, and all the outdoor world are on their feet. It is then that the cock first crows, not this time to announce the dawn, but like a cheerful watchman speeding the course of night. Cattle awake on the meadows ; sheep break their fast on dewy hillsides, and change to a new lair among the ferns ; and houseless men, who have lain down with the fowls, open their dim eyes and behold the beauty of the night.

At what inaudible summons, at what gentle touch of Nature, are all these sleepers thus recalled in the same hour to life ? Do the stars rain down an influence, or do we share some thrill of mother earth below our resting bodies ? Even shepherds and old country-folk, who are the deepest read in these arcana, have not a guess as to the means or purpose of this nightly resurrection. Towards two in the morning they declare the thing takes place, and neither know nor inquire further. And at least it is a pleasant incident. We are disturbed in our slumber, only, like the luxurious Montaigne, " that we may the better and more sensibly relish it." We have a moment to look up on the stars.

And there is a special pleasure for some minds in the reflection that we share the impulse with all outdoor creatures in our neighbourhood, that we have escaped out of the Bastille of civilisation, and are become, for the time being, a mere kindly animal and a sheep of Nature's flock.

When that hour came to me among the pines, I wakened thirsty. My tin was standing by me half full of water. I emptied it at a draught; and feeling broad awake after this internal cold aspersion, sat upright to make a cigarette. The stars were clear, coloured, and jewel-like, but not frosty. A faint silvery vapour stood for the Milky Way. All around me the black fir-points stood upright and stock-still. By the whiteness of the pack-saddle, I could see Modestine walking round and round at the length of her tether; I could hear her steadily munching at the sward; but there was not another sound, save the indescribable quiet talk of the runnel over the stones. I lay lazily smoking and studying the colour of the sky, as we call the void of space, from where it showed a reddish grey behind the pines to where it showed a glossy blue-black between the stars. As if to be more like a pedlar, I wear a silver ring. This I could see faintly shining as I raised or lowered the cigarette; and at each whiff the inside of my hand was illuminated, and became for a second the highest light in the landscape.

A faint wind, more like a moving coolness than a stream of air, passed down the glade from time to time; so that even in my great chamber the air was being renewed all night long. I thought with horror of the inn at Chasseradès and the congregated night-caps; with horror of the nocturnal prowesses of clerks and students, of hot theatres and pass-keys and close

rooms. I have not often enjoyed a more serene possession of myself, nor felt more independent of material aids. The outer world, from which we cower into our houses, seemed after all a gentle habitable place; and night after night a man's bed, it seemed, was laid and waiting for him in the fields, where God keeps an open house. I thought I had rediscovered one of those truths which are revealed to savages and hid from political economists: at the least, I had discovered a new pleasure for myself. And yet even while I was exulting in my solitude I became aware of a strange lack. I wished a companion to lie near me in the starlight, silent and not moving, but ever within touch. For there is a fellowship more quiet even than solitude, and which, rightly understood, is solitude made perfect. And to live out of doors with the woman a man loves is of all lives the most complete and free.

As I thus lay, between content and longing, a faint noise stole towards me through the pines. I thought, at first, it was the crowing of cocks or the barking of dogs at some very distant farm; but steadily and gradually it took articulate shape in my ears, until I became aware that a passenger was going by upon the high-road in the valley, and singing loudly as he went. There was more of good-will than grace in his performance; but he trolled with ample lungs; and the sound of his voice took hold upon the hillside and set the air shaking in the leafy glens. I have heard people passing by night in sleeping cities; some of them sang; one, I remember, played loudly on the bagpipes. I have heard the rattle of a cart or carriage spring up suddenly after hours of stillness, and pass, for some minutes, within the range of my hearing as I lay abed. There is a romance about all

who are abroad in the black hours, and with something of a thrill we try to guess their business. But here the romance was double : first, this glad passenger, lit internally with wine, who sent up his voice in music through the night ; and then I, on the other hand, buckled into my sack, and smoking alone in the pine-woods between four and five thousand feet towards the stars.

When I awoke again (Sunday, 29th September), many of the stars had disappeared ; only the stronger companions of the night still burned visibly overhead ; and away towards the east I saw a faint haze of light upon the horizon, such as had been the Milky Way when I was last awake. Day was at hand. I lit my lantern, and by its glow-worm light put on my boots and gaiters ; then I broke up some bread for Modestine, filled my can at the water-tap, and lit my spirit-lamp to boil myself some chocolate. The blue darkness lay long in the glade where I had so sweetly slumbered ; but soon there was a broad streak of orange melting into gold along the mountain-tops of Vivarais. A solemn glee possessed my mind at this gradual and lovely coming in of day. I heard the runnel with delight ; I looked round me for something beautiful and unexpected ; but the still black pine-trees, the hollow glade, the munching ass, remained unchanged in figure. Nothing had altered but the light, and that, indeed, shed over all a spirit of life and of breathing peace, and moved me to a strange exhilaration.

I drank my water-chocolate, which was hot if it was not rich, and strolled here and there, and up and down about the glade. While I was thus delaying, a gush of steady wind, as long as a heavy sigh, poured direct out of the quarter of the morning. It was cold, and set me sneezing. The trees near at hand

tossed their black plumes in its passage ; and I could see the thin distant spires of pine along the edge of the hill rock slightly to and fro against the golden east. Ten minutes later, the sunlight spread at a gallop along the hillside, scattering shadows and sparkles, and the day had come completely.

I hastened to prepare my pack, and tackle the steep ascent that lay before me ; but I had something on my mind. It was only a fancy ; yet a fancy will sometimes be importunate. I had been most hospitably received and punctually served in my green caravanserai. The room was airy, the water excellent, and the dawn had called me to a moment. I say nothing of the tapestries or the inimitable ceiling, nor yet of the view which I commanded from the windows ; but I felt I was in some one's debt for all this liberal entertainment. And so it pleased me, in a half-laughing way, to leave pieces of money on the turf as I went along, until I had left enough for my night's lodging. I trust they did not fall to some rich and churlish drover.

II

AN APOLOGY FOR IDLERS

"BOSWELL: We grow weary when idle."

"JOHNSON: That is, sir, because others being busy, we want company ; but if we were idle, there would be no growing weary ; we should all entertain one another."

JUST now, when every one is bound, under pain of a decree in absence convicting them of *lèse-respectability*, to enter on some lucrative profession, and labour therein with something not far short of

enthusiasm, a cry from the opposite party who are content when they have enough, and like to look on and enjoy in the meanwhile, savours a little of bravado and gasconade. And yet this should not be. Idleness so called, which does not consist in doing nothing, but in doing a great deal not recognised in the dogmatic formularies of the ruling class, has as good a right to state its position as industry itself. It is admitted that the presence of people who refuse to enter in the great handicap race for sixpenny pieces, is at once an insult and a disenchantment for those who do. A fine fellow (as we see so many) takes his determination, votes for the sixpences, and in the emphatic Americanism, "goes for" them. And while such an one is ploughing distressfully up the road, it is not hard to understand his resentment when he perceives cool persons in the meadows by the wayside, lying with a handkerchief over their ears and a glass at their elbow. Alexander is touched in a very delicate place by the disregard of Diogenes. Where was the glory of having taken Rome for those tumultuous barbarians, who poured into the Senate house, and found the Fathers sitting silent and unmoved by their success? It is a sore thing to have laboured along and scaled the arduous hilltops, and when all is done, find humanity indifferent to your achievement. Hence physicists condemn the unphysical; financiers have only a superficial toleration for those who know little of stocks; literary persons despise the unlettered; and people of all pursuits combine to disparage those who have none.

But though this is one difficulty of the subject, it is not the greatest. You could not be put in prison for speaking against industry, but you can be sent to Coventry for speaking like a fool. The greatest

difficulty with most subjects is to do them well ; therefore, please to remember this is an apology. It is certain that much may be judiciously argued in favour of diligence ; only there is something to be said against it, and that is what, on the present occasion, I have to say. To state one argument is not necessarily to be deaf to all others, and that a man has written a book of travels in Montenegro is no reason why he should never have been to Richmond.

It is surely beyond a doubt that people should be a good deal idle in youth. For though here and there a Lord Macaulay may escape from school honours with all his wits about him, most boys pay so dear for their medals that they never afterwards have a shot in their locker, and begin the world bankrupt. And the same holds true during all the time a lad is educating himself, or suffering others to educate him. It must have been a very foolish old gentleman who addressed Johnson at Oxford in these words : “ Young man, ply your book diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge ; for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task.” The old gentleman seems to have been unaware that many other things besides reading grow irksome, and not a few become impossible, by the time a man has to use spectacles and cannot walk without a stick. Books are good enough in their own way, but they are a mighty bloodless substitute for life. It seems a pity to sit, like the Lady of Shalott, peering into a mirror, with your back turned on all the bustle and glamour of reality. And if a man reads very hard, as the old anecdote reminds us, he will have little time for thought.

If you look back on your own education, I am sure it will not be the full, vivid, instructive hours of

truantry that you regret ; you would rather cancel some lack-lustre periods between sleep and waking in the class. For my own part, I have attended a good many lectures in my time. I still remember that the spinning of a top is a case of Kinetic Stability. I still remember that Emphyteusis is not a disease, nor Stillicide a crime. But though I would not willingly part with such scraps of science, I do not set the same store by them as by certain other odds and ends that I came by in the open street while I was playing truant. This is not the moment to dilate on that mighty place of education, which was the favourite school of Dickens and of Balzac, and turns out yearly many inglorious masters in the Science of the Aspects of Life. Suffice it to say this : if a lad does not learn in the streets, it is because he has no faculty of learning. Nor is the truant always in the streets, for, if he prefers, he may go out by the gardened suburbs into the country. He may pitch on some tuft of lilacs over a burn, and smoke innumerable pipes to the tune of the water on the stones. A bird will sing in the thicket, and there he may fall into a vein of kindly thought, and see things in a new perspective. Why, if this be not education, what is ? We may conceive Mr. Worldly Wiseman accosting such an one, and the conversation that should there-upon ensue :—

“How now, young fellow, what dost thou here ?”

“Truly, sir, I take mine ease.”

“Is not this the hour of the class ? and shouldst thou not be plying thy Book with diligence, to the end thou mayest obtain knowledge ?”

“Nay, but thus also I follow after Learning, by your leave.”

"Learning, quotha ! After what fashion, I pray thee ? Is it mathematics ? "

"No, to be sure."

"Is it metaphysics ? "

"Nor that."

"Is it some language ? "

"Nay, it is no language."

"Is it a trade ? "

"Nor a trade neither."

"Why, then, what is't ? "

"Indeed, sir, as a time may soon come for me to go upon Pilgrimage, I am desirous to note what is commonly done by persons in my case, and where are the ugliest Sloughs and Thickets on the Road ; as also, what manner of Staff is of the best service. Moreover, I lie here, by this water, to learn, by root-of-heart, a lesson which my master teaches me to call Peace, or Contentment."

Hereupon Mr. Worldly Wiseman was much commoved with passion, and shaking his cane with a very threatful countenance, broke forth upon this wise : "Learning, quotha ! " said he ; "I would have all such rogues scourged by the Hangman ! "

And so he would go on his way, ruffling out his cravat with a crackle of starch, like a turkey when it spreads its feathers.

Now this, of Mr. Wiseman's, is the common opinion. A fact is not called a fact, but a piece of gossip, if it does not fall into one of your scholastic categories. An inquiry must be in some acknowledged direction, with a name to go by ; or else you are not inquiring at all, only lounging ; and the workhouse is too good for you. It is supposed that all knowledge is at the bottom of a well, or the far end of a telescope. Sainte-Beuve, as he grew older,

came to regard all experience as a single great book, in which to study for a few years ere we go hence; and it seemed all one to him whether you should read in Chapter xx., which is the differential calculus, or in Chapter xxxix., which is hearing the band play in the gardens. As a matter of fact, an intelligent person, looking out of his eyes and hearkening in his ears, with a smile on his face all the time, will get more true education than many another in a life of heroic vigils. There is certainly some chill and arid knowledge to be found upon the summits of formal and laborious science; but it is all round about you, and for the trouble of looking, that you will acquire the warm and palpitating facts of life. While others are filling their memory with a lumber of words, one half of which they will forget before the week be out, your truant may learn some really useful art: to play the fiddle, to know a good cigar, or to speak with ease and opportunity to all varieties of men. Many who have "plied their book diligently," and know all about some one branch or another of accepted lore, come out of the study with an ancient and owl-like demeanour, and prove dry, stockish, and dyspeptic in all the better and brighter parts of life. Many make a large fortune, who remain under-bred and pathetically stupid to the last. And meantime there goes the idler, who began life along with them—by your leave, a different picture. He has had time to take care of his health and his spirits; he has been a great deal in the open air, which is the most salutary of all things for both body and mind; and if he has never read the great Book in very recondite places, he has dipped into it and skimmed it over to excellent purpose. Might not the student afford some Hebrew roots, and the business man some of his half-crowns,

for a share of the idler's knowledge of life at large, and Art of Living? Nay, and the idler has another and more important quality than these. I mean his wisdom. He who has much looked on at the childish satisfaction of other people in their hobbies, will regard his own with only a very ironical indulgence. He will not be heard among the dogmatists. He will have a great and cool allowance for all sorts of people and opinions. If he finds no out-of-the-way truths, he will identify himself with no very burning falsehood. His way takes him along a by-road, not much frequented, but very even and pleasant, which is called Commonplace Lane, and leads to the Belvedere of Common-sense. Thence he shall command an agreeable, if no very noble prospect; and while others behold the East and West, the Devil and the Sunrise, he will be contentedly aware of a sort of morning hour upon all sublunary things, with an army of shadows running speedily and in many different directions into the great daylight of Eternity. The shadows and the generations, the shrill doctors and the plangent wars, go by into ultimate silence and emptiness; but underneath all this, a man may see, out of the Belvedere windows, much green and peaceful landscape; many fire-lit parlours; good people laughing, drinking, and making love as they did before the Flood or the French Revolution; and the old shepherd telling his tale under the hawthorn.

Extreme *busyness*, whether at school or college, kirk or market, is a symptom of deficient vitality; and a faculty for idleness implies a catholic appetite and a strong sense of personal identity. There is a sort of dead-alive, hackneyed people about, who are scarcely conscious of living except in the exercise of some conventional occupation. Bring these fellows

into the country, or set them aboard ship, and you will see how they pine for their desk or their study. They have no curiosity; they cannot give themselves over to random provocations; they do not take pleasure in the exercise of their faculties for its own sake; and unless Necessity lays about them with a stick, they will even stand still. It is no good speaking to such folk; they *cannot* be idle, their nature is not generous enough; and they pass those hours in a sort of coma, which are not dedicated to furious moiling in the gold-mill. When they do not require to go to the office, when they are not hungry and have no mind to drink, the whole breathing world is a blank to them. If they have to wait an hour or so for a train, they fall into a stupid trance with their eyes open. To see them, you would suppose there was nothing to look at and no one to speak with; you would imagine they were paralysed or alienated; and yet very possibly they are hard workers in their own way, and have good eyesight for a flaw in a deed or a turn of the market. They have been to school and college, but all the time they had their eye on the medal; they have gone about in the world and mixed with clever people, but all the time they were thinking of their own affairs. As if a man's soul were not too small to begin with, they have dwarfed and narrowed theirs by a life of all work and no play; until here they are at forty, with a listless attention, a mind vacant of all material of amusement, and not one thought to rub against another, while they wait for the train. Before he was breeched, he might have clambered on the boxes; when he was twenty, he would have stared at the girls; but now the pipe is smoked out, the snuff-box empty, and my gentleman sits bolt upright upon a bench, with

lamentable eyes. This does not appeal to me as being Success in Life.

But it is not only the person himself who suffers from his busy habits, but his wife and children, his friends and relations, and down to the very people he sits with in a railway-carriage or an omnibus. Perpetual devotion to what a man calls his business, is only to be sustained by perpetual neglect of many other things. And it is not by any means certain that a man's business is the most important thing he has to do. To an impartial estimate it will seem clear that many of the wisest, most virtuous, and most beneficent parts that are to be played upon the Theatre of Life are filled by gratuitous performers, and pass, among the world at large, as phases of idleness. For in that Theatre, not only the walking gentlemen, singing chambermaids, and diligent fiddlers in the orchestra, but those who look on and clap their hands from the benches, do really play a part and fulfil important offices towards the general result. You are no doubt very dependent on the care of your lawyer and stockbroker, of the guards and signalmen who convey you rapidly from place to place, and the policemen who walk the streets for your protection; but is there not a thought of gratitude in your heart for certain other benefactors who set you smiling when they fall in your way, or season your dinner with good company? Colonel Newcome helped to lose his friend's money; Fred Bayham had an ugly trick of borrowing shirts; and yet they were better people to fall among than Mr. Barnes. And though Falstaff was neither sober nor very honest, I think I could name one or two long-faced Barabbases whom the world could better have done without. Hazlitt mentions that he was more sensible of obligation to

Northcote, who had never done him anything he could call a service, than to his whole circle of ostentatious friends; for he thought a good companion emphatically the greatest benefactor. I know there are people in the world who cannot feel grateful unless the favour has been done them at the cost of pain and difficulty. But this is a churlish disposition. A man may send you six sheets of letter-paper covered with the most entertaining gossip, or you may pass half-an-hour pleasantly, perhaps profitably, over an article of his; do you think the service would be greater, if he had made the manuscript in his heart's blood, like a compact with the devil? Do you really fancy you should be more beholden to your correspondent, if he had been damning you all the while for your importunity? Pleasures are more beneficial than duties, because, like the quality of mercy, they are not strained, and they are twice blest. There must always be two to a kiss, and there may be a score in a jest; but wherever there is an element of sacrifice, the favour is conferred with pain, and, among generous people, received with confusion. There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy. By being happy, we sow anonymous benefits upon the world, which remain unknown even to ourselves, or, when they are disclosed, surprise nobody so much as the benefactor. The other day, a ragged, barefoot boy ran down the street after a marble, with so jolly an air that he set every one he passed into a good humour; one of these persons, who had been delivered from more than usually black thoughts, stopped the little fellow and gave him some money with this remark: "You see what sometimes comes of looking pleased." If he had looked pleased before, he had now to look both pleased and mystified. For my part,

I justify this encouragement of smiling rather than tearful children; I do not wish to pay for tears anywhere but upon the stage; but I am prepared to deal largely in the opposite commodity. A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note. He or she is a radiating focus of goodwill; and their entrance into a room is as though another candle had been lighted. We need not care whether they could prove the forty-seventh proposition; they do a better thing than that, they practically demonstrate the great Theorem of the Liveableness of Life. Consequently, if a person cannot be happy without remaining idle, idle he should remain. It is a revolutionary precept; but thanks to hunger and the workhouse, one not easily to be abused; and, within practical limits, it is one of the most incontestable truths in the whole Body of Morality. Look at one of your industrious fellows for a moment, I beseech you. He sows hurry and reaps indigestion; he puts a vast deal of activity out to interest, and receives a large measure of nervous derangement in return. Either he absents himself entirely from all fellowship, and lives a recluse in a garret, with carpet slippers and a leaden inkpot; or he comes among people swiftly and bitterly, in a contraction of his whole nervous system, to discharge some temper before he returns to work. I do not care how much or how well he works, this fellow is an evil feature in other people's lives. They would be happier if he were dead. They could easier do without his services in the Circumlocution Office, than they can tolerate his fractious spirits. He poisons life at the well-head. It is better to be beggared out of hand by a scape-grace nephew, than daily hag-ridden by a peevish uncle.

And what, in God's name, is all this pother about ? For what cause do they embitter their own and other people's lives ? That a man should publish three or thirty articles a year, that he should finish or not finish his great allegorical picture, are questions of little interest to the world. The ranks of life are full ; and although a thousand fall, there are always some to go into the breach. When they told Joan of Arc she should be at home minding women's work, she answered there were plenty to spin and wash. And so, even with your own rare gifts ! When nature is "so careless of the single life," why should we coddle ourselves into the fancy that our own is of exceptional importance ? Suppose Shakespeare had been knocked on the head some dark night in Sir Thomas Lucy's preserves, the world would have wagged on better or worse, the pitcher gone to the well, the scythe to the corn, and the student to his book ; and no one been any the wiser of the loss. There are not many works extant, if you look the alternative all over, which are worth the price of a pound of tobacco to a man of limited means. This is a sobering reflection for the proudest of our earthly vanities. Even a tobacconist may, upon consideration, find no great cause for personal vainglory in the phrase ; for although tobacco is an admirable sedative, the qualities necessary for retailing it are neither rare nor precious in themselves. Alas and alas ! you may take it how you will, but the services of no single individual are indispensable. Atlas was just a gentleman with a protracted nightmare ! And yet you see merchants who go and labour themselves into a great fortune and thence into the bankruptcy court ; scribblers who keep scribbling at little articles until their temper is a cross to all who come

about them, as though Pharaoh should set the Israelites to make a pin instead of a pyramid; and fine young men who work themselves into a decline, and are driven off in a hearse with white plumes upon it. Would you not suppose these persons had been whispered, by the Master of the Ceremonies, the promise of some momentous destiny? and that this lukewarm bullet on which they play their farces was the bull's-eye and centre-point of all the universe? And yet it is not so. The ends for which they give away their priceless youth, for all they know, may be chimerical or hurtful; the glory and riches they expect may never come, or may find them indifferent; and they and the world they inhabit are so inconsiderable that the mind freezes at the thought.

III

WALKING TOURS

It must not be imagined that a walking tour, as some would have us fancy, is merely a better or worse way of seeing the country. There are many ways of seeing landscape quite as good; and none more vivid, in spite of canting dilettantes, than from a railway train. But landscape on a walking tour is quite accessory. He who is indeed of the brotherhood does not voyage in quest of the picturesque, but of certain jolly humours—of the hope and spirit with which the march begins at morning, and the peace and spiritual repletion of the evening's rest. He cannot tell whether he puts his knapsack on, or takes it off, with more

delight. The excitement of the departure puts him in key for that of the arrival. Whatever he does is not only a reward in itself, but will be further rewarded in the sequel ; and so pleasure leads on to pleasure in an endless chain. It is this that so few can understand ; they will either be always lounging or always at five miles an hour ; they do not play off the one against the other, prepare all day for the evening, and all evening for the next day. And, above all, it is here that your over-walker fails of comprehension. His heart rises against those who drink their curaçoa in liqueur-glasses, when he himself can swill it in a brown John. He will not believe that the flavour is more delicate in the smaller dose. He will not believe that to walk this unconscionable distance is merely to stupefy and brutalise himself, and come to his inn, at night, with a sort of frost on his five wits, and a starless night of darkness in his spirit. Not for him the mild luminous evening of the temperate walker ! He has nothing left of man but a physical need for bedtime and a double nightcap ; and even his pipe, if he be a smoker, will be savourless and disenchanted. It is the fate of such an one to take twice as much trouble as is needed to obtain happiness, and miss the happiness in the end ; he is the man of the proverb, in short, who goes farther and fares worse.

Now, to be properly enjoyed, a walking tour should be gone upon alone. If you go in a company, or even in pairs, it is no longer a walking tour in anything but name ; it is something else, and more in the nature of a picnic. A walking tour should be gone upon alone, because freedom is of the essence ; because you should be able to stop and go on, and follow this way or that, as the freak takes you ; and because

you must have your own pace, and neither trot alongside a champion walker, nor mince in time with a girl. And then you must be open to all impressions, and let your thoughts take colour from what you see. You should be as a pipe for any wind to play upon. "I cannot see the wit," says Hazlitt, "of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country I wish to vegetate like the country,"—which is the gist of all that can be said upon the matter. There should be no cackle of voices at your elbow, to jar on the meditative silence of the morning. And so long as a man is reasoning he cannot surrender himself to that fine intoxication that comes of much motion in the open air, that begins in a sort of a dazzle and sluggishness of the brain, and ends in a peace that passes comprehension.

During the first day or so of any tour there are moments of bitterness, when the traveller feels more than coldly towards his knapsack, when he is half in a mind to throw it bodily over the hedge, and, like Christian on a similar occasion, "give three leaps and go on singing." And yet it soon acquires a property of easiness. It becomes magnetic; the spirit of the journey enters into it. And no sooner have you passed the straps over your shoulder than the lees of sleep are cleared from you, you pull yourself together with a shake, and fall at once into your stride. And surely, of all possible moods, this, in which a man takes the road, is the best. Of course if he *will* keep thinking of his anxieties, if he *will* open the merchant Abudah's chest and walk arm-in-arm with the hag—why, wherever he is, and whether he walk fast or slow, the chances are that he will not be happy. And so much the more shame to himself! There are perhaps thirty men setting forth

at that same hour, and I would lay a large wager there is not another dull face among the thirty. It would be a fine thing to follow, in a coat of darkness, one after another of these wayfarers, some summer morning, for the first few miles upon the road. This one, who walks fast, with a keen look in his eyes, is all concentrated in his own mind; he is up at his loom, weaving and weaving, to set the landscape to words. This one peers about, as he goes, among the grasses; he waits by the canal to watch the dragon-flies; he leans on the gate of the pasture, and cannot look enough upon the complacent kine. And here comes another, talking, laughing, and gesticulating to himself. His face changes from time to time, as indignation flashes from his eyes or anger clouds his forehead. He is composing articles, delivering orations, and conducting the most impassioned interviews, by the way. A little farther on, and it is as like as not he will begin to sing. And well for him, supposing him to be no great master in that art, if he stumble across no stolid peasant at a corner; for on such an occasion, I scarcely know which is the more troubled, or whether it is worse to suffer the confusion of your troubadour, or the unfeigned alarm of your clown. A sedentary population, accustomed, besides, to the strange mechanical bearing of the common tramp, can in no wise explain to itself the gaiety of these passers-by. I knew one man who was arrested as a runaway lunatic, because, although a full-grown person with a red beard, he skipped as he went like a child. And you would be astonished if I were to tell you all the grave and learned heads who have confessed to me that, when on walking tours, they sang—and sang very ill—and had a pair of red ears when, as described above, the inauspicious peasant plumped

into their arms from round a corner. And here, lest you should think I am exaggerating, is Hazlitt's own confession, from his essay "On Going a Journey," which is so good that there should be a tax levied on all who have not read it :—

"Give me the clear blue sky over my head," says he, "and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy."

Bravo! After that adventure of my friend with the policeman, you would not have cared, would you, to publish that in the first person? But we have no bravery nowadays, and, even in books, must all pretend to be as dull and foolish as our neighbours. It was not so with Hazlitt. And notice how learned he is (as, indeed, throughout the essay) in the theory of walking tours. He is none of your athletic men in purple stockings, who walk their fifty miles a day: three hours' march is his ideal. And then he must have a winding road, the epicure.

Yet there is one thing I object to in these words of his, one thing in the great master's practice that seems to me not wholly wise. I do not approve of that leaping and running. Both of these hurry the respiration; they both shake up the brain out of its glorious open-air confusion; and they both break the pace. Uneven walking is not so agreeable to the body, and it distracts and irritates the mind. Whereas when once you have fallen into an equable stride, it requires no conscious thought from you to keep it up, and yet it prevents you from thinking earnestly of anything else. Like knitting, like the work of a copying clerk, it gradually neutralises and sets to

sleep the serious activity of the mind. We can think of this or that, lightly and laughingly, as a child thinks, or as we think in a morning doze ; we can make puns or puzzle out acrostics, and trifle in a thousand ways with words and rhymes ; but when it comes to honest work, when we come to gather ourselves together for an effort, we may sound the trumpet as loud and long as we please ; the great barons of the mind will not rally to the standard, but sit, each one, at home, warming his hands over his own fire, and brooding on his own private thought !

In the course of a day's walk, you see, there is much variance in the mood. From the exhilaration of the start, to the happy phlegm of the arrival, the change is certainly great. As the day goes on, the traveller moves from the one extreme end towards the other. He becomes more and more incorporated with the material landscape, and the open-air drunkenness grows upon him with great strides, until he posts along the road, and sees everything about him, as in a cheerful dream. The first is certainly brighter, but the second stage is the more peaceful. A man does not make so many articles towards the end, nor does he laugh aloud ; but the purely animal pleasures, the sense of physical wellbeing, the delight of every inhalation, of every time the muscles tighten down the thigh, console him for the absence of the others, and bring him to his destination still content.

Nor must I forget to say a word on bivouacs. You come to a milestone on a hill, or some place where deep ways meet under trees ; and off goes the knapsack, and down you sit to smoke a pipe in the shade. You sink into yourself, and the birds come round and look at you ; and your smoke dissipates upon the afternoon under the blue dome of heaven ; and the sun lies

warm upon your feet, and the cool air visits your neck and turns aside your open shirt. If you are not happy, you must have an evil conscience. You may dally as long as you like by the roadside. It is almost as if the millennium were arrived, when we shall throw our clocks and watches over the housetop, and remember time and seasons no more. Not to keep hours for a lifetime is, I was going to say, to live for ever. You have no idea, unless you have tried it, how endlessly long is a summer's day that you measure out only by hunger, and bring to an end only when you are drowsy. I know a village where there are hardly any clocks, where no one knows more of the days of the week than by a sort of instinct for the fête on Sundays, and where only one person can tell you the day of the month, and she is generally wrong; and if people were aware how slow Time journeyed in that village, and what armfuls of spare hours he gives, over and above the bargain, to its wise inhabitants, I believe there would be a stampede out of London, Liverpool, Paris, and a variety of large towns, where the clocks lose their heads, and shake the hours out each one faster than the other, as though they were all in a wager. And all these foolish pilgrims would each bring his own misery along with him, in a watch-pocket! It is to be noticed there were no clocks and watches in the much-vaunted days before the Flood. It follows, of course, there were no appointments, and punctuality was not yet thought upon. "Though ye take from a covetous man all his treasure," says Milton, "he has yet one jewel left; ye cannot deprive him of his covetousness." And so I would say of a modern man of business, you may do what you will for him, put him in Eden, give him the elixir of life—he has still a flaw at heart, he still

has his business habits. Now, there is no time when business habits are more mitigated than on a walking tour. And so during these halts, as I say, you will feel almost free.

But it is at night, and after dinner, that the best hour comes. There are no such pipes to be smoked as those that follow a good day's march; the flavour of the tobacco is a thing to be remembered, it is so dry and aromatic, so full and so fine. If you wind up the evening with grog, you will own there was never such grog; at every sip a jocund tranquillity spreads about your limbs, and sits easily in your heart. If you read a book—and you will never do so save by fits and starts—you find the language strangely racy and harmonious; words take a new meaning; single sentences possess the ear for half-an-hour together; and the writer endears himself to you, at every page, by the nicest coincidence of sentiment. It seems as if it were a book you had written yourself in a dream. To all we have read on such occasions we look back with special favour. “It was on the 10th of April, 1798,” says Hazlitt, with amorous precision, “that I sat down to a volume of the new ‘Héloïse,’ at the Inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken.” I should wish to quote more, for though we are mighty fine fellows nowadays, we cannot write like Hazlitt. And, talking of that, a volume of Hazlitt's essays would be a capital pocket-book on such a journey; so would a volume of Heine's songs; and for “Tristram Shandy” I can pledge a fair experience.

If the evening be fine and warm, there is nothing better in life than to lounge before the inn door in the sunset, or lean over the parapet of the bridge, to watch the weeds and the quick fishes. It is then, if ever, that you taste Joviality to the full significance of that

audacious word. Your muscles are so agreeably slack, you feel so clean and so strong and so idle, that whether you move or sit still, whatever you do is done with pride and a kingly sort of pleasure. You fall in talk with any one, wise or foolish, drunk or sober. And it seems as if a hot walk purged you, more than of anything else, of all narrowness and pride, and left curiosity to play its part freely, as in a child or a man of science. You lay aside all your own hobbies, to watch provincial humours develop themselves before you, now as a laughable farce, and now grave and beautiful like an old tale.

Or perhaps you are left to your own company for the night, and surly weather imprisons you by the fire. You may remember how Burns, numbering past pleasures, dwells upon the hours when he has been "happy thinking." It is a phrase that may well perplex a poor modern, girt about on every side by clocks and chimes, and haunted, even at night, by flaming dial-plates. For we are all so busy, and have so many far-off projects to realise, and castles in the fire to turn into solid habitable mansions on a gravel soil, that we can find no time for pleasure trips into the Land of Thought and among the Hills of Vanity. Changed times, indeed, when we must sit all night, beside the fire, with folded hands; and a changed world for most of us, when we find we can pass the hours without discontent, and be happy thinking. We are in such haste to be doing, to be writing, to be gathering gear, to make our voice audible a moment in the derisive silence of eternity, that we forget that one thing, of which these are but the parts—namely, to live. We fall in love, we drink hard, we run to and fro upon the earth like frightened sheep. And now you are to ask yourself if, when all is done, you would

not have been better to sit by the fire at home, and be happy thinking. To sit still and contemplate,—to remember the faces of women without desire, to be pleased by the great deeds of men without envy, to be everything and everywhere in sympathy, and yet content to remain where and what you are—is not this to know both wisdom and virtue, and to dwell with happiness? After all, it is not they who carry flags, but they who look upon it from a private chamber, who have the fun of the procession. And once you are at that, you are in the very humour of all social heresy. It is no time for shuffling, or for big, empty words. If you ask yourself what you mean by fame, riches, or learning, the answer is far to seek; and you go back into that kingdom of light imaginations, which seem so vain in the eyes of Philistines perspiring after wealth, and so momentous to those who are stricken with the disproportions of the world, and, in the face of the gigantic stars, cannot stop to split differences between two degrees of the infinitesimally small, such as a tobacco-pipe or the Roman Empire, a million of money or a fiddlestick's end.

You lean from the window, your last pipe reeking whitely into the darkness, your body full of delicious pains, your mind enthroned in the seventh circle of content; when suddenly the mood changes, the weather-cock goes about, and you ask yourself one question more: whether, for the interval, you have been the wisest philosopher or the most egregious of donkeys? Human experience is not yet able to reply; but at least you have had a fine moment, and looked down upon all the kingdoms of the earth. And whether it was wise or foolish, to-morrow's travel will carry you, body and mind, into some different parish of the infinite.

IV

WILL O' THE MILL

THE PLAIN AND THE STARS

THE Mill where Will lived with his adopted parents stood in a falling valley between pinewoods and great mountains. Above, hill after hill soared upwards until they soared out of the depth of the hardest timber, and stood naked against the sky. Some way up, a long grey village lay like a seam or a rag of vapour on a wooded hillside; and when the wind was favourable, the sound of the church bells would drop down thin and silvery, to Will. Below, the valley grew ever steeper and steeper, and at the same time widened out on either hand; and from an eminence beside the mill it was possible to see its whole length and away beyond it over a wide plain, where the river turned and shone, and moved on from city to city on its voyage towards the sea. It chanced that over this valley there lay a pass into a neighbouring kingdom; so that, quiet and rural as it was, the road that ran along beside the river was a high thoroughfare between two splendid and powerful societies. All through the summer, travelling-carriages came crawling up, or went plunging briskly downwards past the mill; and as it happened that the other side was very much easier of ascent, the path was not much frequented, except by people going in one direction; and of all the carriages that Will saw go by, five-sixths were plunging briskly downwards and only one-sixth crawling up. Much more was this the case with foot-passengers. All the light-footed tourists, all the pedlars laden with strange wares, were tending

downward like the river that accompanied their path. Nor was this all; for when Will was yet a child a disastrous war arose over a great part of the world. The newspapers were full of defeats and victories, the earth rang with cavalry hoofs, and often for days together and for miles around the coil of battle terrified good people from their labours in the field. Of all this, nothing was heard for a long time in the valley; but at last one of the commanders pushed an army over the pass by forced marches, and for three days horse and foot, cannon and tumbril, drum and standard, kept pouring downward past the mill. All day the child stood and watched them on their passage; the rhythmical stride, the pale, unshaven faces tanned about the eyes, the discoloured regimentals and the tattered flags, filled him with a sense of weariness, pity, and wonder; and all night long, after he was in bed, he could hear the cannon pounding and the feet trampling, and the great armament sweeping onward and downward past the mill. No one in the valley ever heard the fate of the expedition, for they lay out of the way of gossip in those troublous times; but Will saw one thing plainly, that not a man returned. Whither had they all gone? Whither went all the tourists and pedlars with strange wares? whither all the brisk barouches with servants in the dicky? whither the water of the stream, ever coursing downward, and ever renewed from above? Even the wind blew oftener down the valley, and carried the dead leaves along with it in the fall. It seemed like a great conspiracy of things animate and inanimate; they all went downward, fleetly and gaily downward, and only he, it seemed, remained behind, like a stock upon the wayside. It sometimes made him glad when he noticed how the fishes kept their

heads up stream. They, at least, stood faithfully by him, while all else were posting downward to the unknown world.

One evening he asked the miller where the river went.

"It goes down the valley," answered he, "and turns a power of mills—sixscore mills, they say, from here to Unterdeck—and it none the wearier after all. And then it goes out into the lowlands, and waters the great corn country, and runs through a sight of fine cities (so they say) where kings live all alone in great palaces, with a sentry walking up and down before the door. And it goes under bridges with stone men upon them, looking down and smiling so curious at the water, and living folks leaning their elbows on the wall and looking over too. And then it goes on and on, and down through marshes and sands, until at last it falls into the sea, where the ships are that bring parrots and tobacco from the Indies. Ay, it has a long trot before it as it goes singing over our weir, bless its heart!"

"And what is the sea?" asked Will.

"The sea!" cried the miller. "Lord help us all, it is the greatest thing God made! That is where all the water in the world runs down into a great salt lake. There it lies, as flat as my hand, and as innocent-like as a child; but they do say when the wind blows it gets up into water-mountains bigger than any of ours, and swallows down great ships bigger than our mill, and makes such a roaring that you can hear it miles away upon the land. There are great fish in it five times bigger than a bull, and one old serpent as long as our river, and as old as all the world, with whiskers like a man, and a crown of silver on her head."

Will thought he had never heard anything like this, and he kept on asking question after question about the world that lay away down the river, with all its perils and marvels, until the old miller became quite interested himself, and at last took him by the hand and led him to the hill-top that overlooks the valley and the plain. The sun was near setting, and hung low down in a cloudless sky. Everything was defined and glorified in golden light. Will had never seen so great an expanse of country in his life ; he stood and gazed with all his eyes. He could see the cities, and the woods and fields, and the bright curves of the river, and far away to where the rim of the plain trenched along the shining heavens. An overmastering emotion seized upon the boy, soul and body ; his heart beat so thickly that he could not breathe ; the scene swam before his eyes ; the sun seemed to wheel round and round, and throw off, as it turned, strange shapes which disappeared with the rapidity of thought, and were succeeded by others. Will covered his face with his hands, and burst into a violent fit of tears ; and the poor miller, sadly disappointed and perplexed, saw nothing better for it than to take him up in his arms and carry him home in silence.

From that day forward Will was full of new hopes and longings. Something kept tugging at his heart-strings ; the running water carried his desires along with it as he dreamed over its fleeting surface ; the wind, as it ran over innumerable tree-tops, hailed him with encouraging words ; branches beckoned downward ; the open road, as it shouldered round the angles and went turning and vanishing fast and faster down the valley, tortured him with its solicitations. He spent long whiles on the eminence,

looking down the rivershed and abroad on the fat lowlands, and watched the clouds that travelled forth upon the sluggish wind and trailed their purple shadows on the plain; or he would linger by the wayside, and follow the carriages with his eyes as they rattled downward by the river. It did not matter what it was; everything that went that way, were it cloud or carriage, bird, or brown water in the stream, he felt his heart flow out after it in an ecstasy of longing.

We are told by men of science that all the ventures of mariners on the sea, all that counter-marching of tribes and races that confounds old history with its dust and rumour, sprang from nothing more abstruse than the laws of supply and demand, and a certain natural instinct for cheap rations. To any one thinking deeply, this will seem a dull and pitiful explanation. The tribes that came swarming out of the North and East, if they were indeed pressed onward from behind by others, were drawn at the same time by the magnetic influence of the South and West. The fame of other lands had reached them; the name of the eternal city rang in their ears; they were not colonists, but pilgrims; they travelled towards wine and gold and sunshine, but their hearts were set on something higher. That divine unrest, that old stinging trouble of humanity that makes all high achievements and all miserable failure, the same that spread wings with Icarus, the same that sent Columbus into the desolate Atlantic, inspired and supported these barbarians on their perilous march. There is one legend which profoundly represents their spirit, of how a flying party of these wanderers encountered a very old man shod with iron. The old man asked them whither they were going;

and they answered with one voice : " To the Eternal City ! " He looked upon them gravely. " I have sought it," he said, " over the most part of the world. Three such pairs as I now carry on my feet have I worn out upon this pilgrimage, and now the fourth is growing slender underneath my steps. And all this while I have not found the city." And he turned and went his own way alone, leaving them astonished.

And yet this would scarcely parallel the intensity of Will's feeling for the plain. If he could only go far enough out there, he felt as if his eyesight would be purged and clarified, as if his hearing would grow more delicate, and his very breath would come and go with luxury. He was transplanted and withering where he was ; he lay in a strange country and was sick for home. Bit by bit, he pieced together broken notions of the world below : of the river, ever moving and growing until it sailed forth into the majestic ocean ; of the cities, full of brisk and beautiful people, playing fountains, bands of music and marble palaces, and lighted up at night from end to end with artificial stars of gold ; of the great churches, wise universities, brave armies, and untold money lying stored in vaults ; of the high-flying vice that moved in the sunshine, and the stealth and swiftness of midnight murder. I have said he was sick as if for home : the figure halts. He was like some one lying in twilit, formless pre-existence, and stretching out his hands lovingly towards many-coloured, many-sounding life. It was no wonder he was unhappy, he would go and tell the fish : they were made for their life, wished for no more than worms and running water, and a hole below a falling bank ; but he was differently designed, full of desires and aspirations, itching at the fingers, lusting with the eyes, whom the whole variegated

world could not satisfy with aspects. The true life, the true bright sunshine, lay far out upon the plain, and, O ! to see this sunlight once before he died ! to move with a jocund spirit in a golden land ! to hear the trained singers and sweet church bells, and see the holiday gardens ! “ And, O fish ! ” he would cry, “ if you would only turn your noses down stream, you could swim so easily into the fabled waters and see the vast ships passing over your head like clouds, and hear the great water-hills making music over you all day long ! ” But the fish kept looking patiently in their own direction, until Will hardly knew whether to laugh or cry.

Hitherto the traffic on the road had passed by Will, like something seen in a picture : he had perhaps exchanged salutations with a tourist, or caught sight of an old gentleman in a travelling cap at a carriage window ; but for the most part it had been a mere symbol, which he contemplated from apart and with something of a superstitious feeling. A time came at last when this was to be changed. The miller, who was a greedy man in his way, and never forewent an opportunity of honest profit, turned the mill-house into a little wayside inn, and, several pieces of good fortune falling in opportunely, built stables and got the position of postmaster on the road. It now became Will's duty to wait upon people, as they sat to break their fasts in the little arbour at the top of the mill garden ; and you may be sure that he kept his ears open, and learned many new things about the outside world as he brought the omelette or the wine. Nay, he would often get into conversation with single guests, and by adroit questions and polite attention, not only gratify his own curiosity, but win the goodwill of the travellers. Many complimented the old

couple on their serving-boy ; and a professor was eager to take him away with him, and have him properly educated in the plain. The miller and his wife were mightily astonished, and even more pleased. They thought it a very good thing that they should have opened their inn. " You see," the old man would remark, " he has a kind of talent for a publican ; he never would have made anything else ! " And so life wagged on in the valley, with high satisfaction to all concerned but Will. Every carriage that left the inn-door seemed to take a part of him away with it ; and when people jestingly offered him a lift, he could with difficulty command his emotion. Night after night he would dream that he was awakened by flustered servants, and that a splendid equipage waited at the door to carry him down into the plain ; night after night ; until the dream, which had seemed all jollity to him at first, began to take on a colour of gravity, and the nocturnal summons and waiting equipage occupied a place in his mind as something to be both feared and hoped for.

One day, when Will was about sixteen, a fat young man arrived at sunset to pass the night. He was a contented-looking fellow, with a jolly eye, and carried a knapsack. While dinner was preparing, he sat in the arbour to read a book ; but as soon as he had begun to observe Will, the book was laid aside ; he was plainly one of those who prefer living people to people made of ink and paper. Will, on his part, although he had not been much interested in the stranger at first sight, soon began to take a great deal of pleasure in his talk, which was full of good nature and good sense, and at last conceived a great respect for his character and wisdom. They sat far into the night ; and about two in the morning Will opened

his heart to the young man, and told him how he longed to leave the valley, and what bright hopes he had connected with the cities of the plain. The young man whistled, and then broke into a smile.

“My young friend,” he remarked, “you are a very curious little fellow, to be sure, and wish a great many things which you will never get. Why, you would feel quite ashamed if you knew how the little fellows in these fairy cities of yours are all after the same sort of nonsense, and keep breaking their hearts to get up into the mountains. And let me tell you, those who go down into the plains are a very short while there before they wish themselves heartily back again. The air is not so light nor so pure; nor is the sun any brighter. As for the beautiful men and women, you would see many of them in rags, and many of them deformed with horrible disorders, and a city is so hard a place for people who are poor and sensitive that many choose to die by their own hand.”

“You must think me very simple,” answered Will. “Although I have never been out of this valley, believe me, I have used my eyes. I know how one thing lives on another; for instance, how the fish hangs in the eddy to catch his fellows; and the shepherd, who makes so pretty a picture carrying home the lamb, is only carrying it home for dinner. I do not expect to find all things right in your cities. That is not what troubles me; it might have been that once upon a time; but although I live here always, I have asked many questions and learned a great deal in these last years, and certainly enough to cure me of my old fancies. But you would not have me die like a dog and not see all that is to be seen, and do all that a man can do, let it be good or evil? you would not have me spend all my days between this

road here and the river, and not so much as make a motion to be up and live my life?—I would rather die out of hand," he cried, "than linger on as I am doing."

"Thousands of people," said the young man, "live and die like you, and are none the less happy."

"Ah!" said Will, "if there are thousands who would like, why should not one of them have my place?"

It was quite dark; there was a hanging lamp in the arbour which lit up the table and the faces of the speakers; and along the arch, the leaves upon the trellis stood out illuminated against the night sky, a pattern of transparent green upon a dusky purple. The fat young man rose, and, taking Will by the arm, led him out under the open heavens.

"Did you ever look at the stars?" he asked, pointing upwards.

"Often and often," answered Will.

"And do you know what they are?"

"I have fancied many things."

"They are worlds like ours," said the young man. "Some of them less; many of them a million times greater; and some of the least sparkles that you see are not only worlds but whole clusters of worlds turning about each other in the midst of space. We do not know what there may be in any of them; perhaps the answer to all our difficulties or the cure of all our sufferings: and yet we can never reach them; not all the skill of the craftiest of men can fit out a ship for the nearest of these our neighbours, nor would the life of the most aged suffice for such a journey. When a great battle has been lost or a dear friend is dead, when we are hipped or in high spirits, there they are, unweariedly shining overhead. We may

stand down here, a whole army of us together, and shout until we break our hearts, and not a whisper reaches them. We may climb the highest mountain, and we are no nearer them. All we can do is to stand down here in the garden and take off our hats; the starshine lights upon our heads, and where mine is a little bald, I daresay you can see it glisten in the darkness. The mountain and the mouse. That is like to be all we shall ever have to do with Arcturus or Aldebaran. Can you apply a parable?" he added, laying his hand upon Will's shoulder. "It is not the same thing as a reason, but usually vastly more convincing."

Will hung his head a little, and then raised it once more to heaven. The stars seemed to expand and emit a sharper brilliancy; and as he kept turning his eyes higher and higher, they seemed to increase in multitude under his gaze.

"I see," he said, turning to the young man. "We are in a rat-trap."

"Something of that size. Did you ever see a squirrel turning in a cage? and another squirrel sitting philosophically over his nuts? I needn't ask you which of them looked more of a fool."

THE PARSON'S MARJORY

After some years the old people died, both in one winter, very carefully tended by their adopted son, and very quietly mourned when they were gone. People who had heard of his roving fancies supposed he would hasten to sell the property, and go down the river to push his fortunes. But there was never any sign of such an intention on the part of Will. On the contrary, he had the inn set on a better footing, and

hired a couple of servants to assist him in carrying it on ; and there he settled down, a kind, talkative, inscrutable young man, six feet three in his stockings, with an iron constitution and a friendly voice. He soon began to take rank in the district as a bit of an oddity : it was not much to be wondered at from the first, for he was always full of notions, and kept calling the plainest common sense in question ; but what most raised the report upon him was the odd circumstance of his courtship with the parson's Marjory.

The parson's Marjory was a lass about nineteen, when Will would be about thirty ; well enough looking, and much better educated than any other girl in that part of the country, as became her parentage. She held her head very high, and had already refused several offers of marriage with a grand air, which had got her hard names among the neighbours. For all that she was a good girl, and one that would have made any man well contented.

Will had never seen much of her ; for although the church and parsonage were only two miles from his own door, he was never known to go there but on Sundays. It chanced, however, that the parsonage fell into disrepair, and had to be dismantled ; and the parson and his daughter took lodgings for a month or so, on very much reduced terms, at Will's inn. Now, what with the inn, and the mill, and the old miller's savings, our friend was a man of substance ; and besides that he had a name for good temper and shrewdness, which make a capital portion in marriage ; and so it was currently gossiped, among their ill-wishers that the parson and his daughter had not chosen their temporary lodging with their eyes shut. Will was about the last man in the world to be cajoled or frightened into marriage. You had only to look

into his eyes, limpid and still like pools of water, and yet with a sort of clear light that seemed to come from within, and you would understand at once that here was one who knew his own mind, and would stand to it immovably. Marjory herself was no weakling by her looks, with strong, steady eyes and a resolute and quiet bearing. It might be a question whether she was not Will's match in steadfastness, after all, or which of them would rule the roast in marriage. But Marjory had never given it a thought, and accompanied her father with the most unshaken innocence and unconcern.

The season was still so early that Will's customers were few and far between ; but the lilacs were already flowering, and the weather was so mild that the party took dinner under the trellis, with the noise of the river in their ears and the woods ringing about them with the songs of birds. Will soon began to take a particular pleasure in these dinners. The parson was rather a dull companion, with a habit of dozing at table ; but nothing rude or cruel ever fell from his lips. And as for the parson's daughter, she suited her surroundings with the best grace imaginable ; and whatever she said seemed so pat and pretty that Will conceived a great idea of her talents. He could see her face, as she leaned forward, against a background of rising pine woods ; her eyes shone peaceably ; the light lay around her hair like a kerchief ; something that was hardly a smile rippled her pale cheeks, and Will could not contain himself from gazing on her in an agreeable dismay. She looked, even in her quietest moments, so complete in herself, and so quick with life down to her finger-tips and the very skirts of her dress, that the remainder of created things became no more than a blot by comparison ;

and if Will glanced away from her to her surroundings, the trees looked inanimate and senseless, the clouds hung in heaven like dead things, and even the mountain tops were disenchanted. The whole valley could not compare in looks with this one girl.

Will was always observant in the society of his fellow-creatures; but his observation became almost painfully eager in the case of Marjory. He listened to all she uttered, and read her eyes, at the same time, for the unspoken commentary. Many kind, simple, and sincere speeches found an echo in his heart. He became conscious of a soul beautifully poised upon itself, nothing doubting, nothing desiring, clothed in peace. It was not possible to separate her thoughts from her appearance. The turn of her wrist, the still sound of her voice, the light in her eyes, the lines of her body, full in tune with her grave and gentle words, like the accompaniment that sustains and harmonises the voice of the singer. Her influence was one thing, not to be divided or discussed, only to be felt with gratitude and joy. To Will, her presence recalled something of his childhood, and the thought of her took its place in his mind beside that of dawn, of running water, and of the earliest violets and lilacs. It is the property of things seen for the first time, or for the first time after long, like the flowers in spring, to reawaken in us the sharp edge of sense and that impression of mystic strangeness which otherwise passes out of life with the coming of years; but the sight of a loved face is what renews a man's character from the fountain upwards.

One day after dinner Will took a stroll among the firs; a grave beatitude possessed him from top to toe, and he kept smiling to himself and the landscape as he went. The river ran between the stepping-stones

with a pretty wimple ; a bird sang loudly in the wood ; the hill-tops looked immeasurably high, and, as he glanced at them from time to time, seemed to contemplate his movements with a beneficent but awful curiosity. His way took him to the eminence which overlooked the plain ; and there he sat down upon a stone, and fell into deep and pleasant thought. The plain lay abroad with its cities and silver river ; everything was asleep, except a great eddy of birds which kept rising and falling and going round and round in the blue air. He repeated Marjory's name aloud, and the sound of it gratified his ear. He shut his eyes, and her image sprang up before him, quietly luminous and attended with good thoughts. The river might run for ever ; the birds fly higher and higher till they touched the stars. He saw it was empty bustle after all ; for here, without stirring a foot, waiting patiently in his own narrow valley, he also had attained the better sunlight.

The next day Will made a sort of declaration across the dinner-table, while the parson was filling his pipe.

"Miss Marjory," he said, "I never knew any one I liked so well as you. I am mostly a cold, unkindly sort of man ; not from want of heart, but out of strangeness in my way of thinking ; and people seem far away from me. 'Tis as if there were a circle round me, which kept every one out but you ; I can hear the others talking and laughing ; but you come quite close.—Maybe this is disagreeable to you ?" he asked.

Marjory made no answer.

"Speak up, girl," said the parson.

"Nay, now," returned Will, "I wouldn't press her, parson. I feel tongue-tied myself, who am not used

to it ; and she's a woman, and little more than a child, when all is said. But for my part, as far as I can understand what people mean by it, I fancy I must be what they call in love. I do not wish to be held as committing myself ; for I may be wrong ; but that is how I believe things are with me. And if Miss Marjory should feel any otherwise on her part, mayhap she would be so kind as shake her head."

Marjory was silent, and gave no sign that she had heard.

"How is that, parson ?" asked Will.

"The girl must speak," replied the parson, laying down his pipe.—"Here's our neighbour, who says he loves you, Madge. Do you love him, ay or no ?"

"I think I do," said Marjory faintly.

"Well then, that's all that could be wished !" cried Will heartily. And he took her hand across the table and held it a moment in both of his with great satisfaction.

"You must marry," observed the parson, replacing his pipe in his mouth.

"Is that the right thing to do, think you ?" demanded Will.

"It is indispensable," said the parson.

"Very well," replied the wooer.

Two or three days passed away with great delight to Will, although a bystander might scarce have found it out. He continued to take his meals opposite Marjory, and to talk with her and gaze upon her in her father's presence ; but he made no attempt to see her alone, nor in any other way changed his conduct towards her from what it had been since the beginning. Perhaps the girl was a little disappointed, and perhaps not unjustly ; and yet if it had been enough to be always in the thoughts of another person,

and so pervade and alter his whole life, she might have been thoroughly contented. For she was never out of Will's mind for an instant. He sat over the stream, and watched the dust of the eddy, and the poised fish, and straining weeds; he wandered out alone into the purple even, with all the blackbirds piping round him in the wood; he rose early in the morning, and saw the sky turn from grey to gold, and the light leap upon the hill-tops; and all the while he kept wondering if he had never seen such things before, or how it was that they should look so different now. The sound of his own mill-wheel, or of the wind among the trees, confounded and charmed his heart. The most enchanting thoughts presented themselves unbidden in his mind. He was so happy that he could not sleep at night, and so restless that he could hardly sit still out of her company. And yet it seemed as if he avoided her rather than sought her out.

One day, as he was coming home from a ramble, Will found Marjory in the garden picking flowers, and, as he came up with her, slackened his pace and continued walking by her side.

"You like flowers?" he said.

"Indeed I love them dearly," she replied. "Do you?"

"Why, no," said he, "not so much. They are a very small affair when all is done. I can fancy people caring for them greatly, but not doing as you are just now."

"How?" she asked, pausing and looking up at him.

"Plucking them," said he. "They are a deal better off where they are, and look a deal prettier, if you go to that."

"I wish to have them for my own," she answered,

“to carry them near my heart, and keep them in my room. They tempt me when they grow here; they seem to say, ‘Come and do something with us’; but once I have cut them and put them by, the charm is laid, and I can look at them with quite an easy heart.”

“You wish to possess them,” replied Will, “in order to think no more about them. It’s a bit like killing the goose with the golden eggs. It’s a bit like what I wished to do when I was a boy. Because I had a fancy for looking out over the plain, I wished to go down there—where I couldn’t look out over it any longer. Was not that fine reasoning? Dear, dear, if they only thought of it, all the world would do like me; and you would let your flowers alone, just as I stay up here in the mountains.” Suddenly he broke off sharp. “By the Lord!” he cried. And when she asked him what was wrong, he turned the question off, and walked away into the house with rather a humorous expression of face.

He was silent at table; and after the night had fallen and the stars had come out overhead, he walked up and down for hours in the courtyard and garden with an uneven pace. There was still a light in the window of Marjory’s room: one little oblong patch of orange in a world of dark blue hills and silver starlight. Will’s mind ran a great deal on the window; but his thoughts were not very lover-like. “There she is in her room,” he thought, “and there are the stars overhead:—a blessing upon both!” Both were good influences in his life; both soothed and braced him in his profound contentment with the world. And what more should he desire with either? The fat young man and his counsels were so present to his mind that he threw back his head and, putting his hands before his mouth, shouted aloud to the

populous heavens. Whether from the position of his head or the sudden strain of the exertion, he seemed to see a momentary shock among the stars, and a diffusion of frosty light pass from one to another along the sky. At the same instant, a corner of the blind was lifted and lowered again at once. He laughed a loud ho-ho ! “ One and another ! ” thought Will. “ The stars tremble, and the blind goes up. Why, before Heaven, what a great magician I must be ! Now if I were only a fool, should not I be in a pretty way ? ” And he went off to bed, chuckling to himself “ If I were only a fool ! ”

The next morning, pretty early, he saw her once more in the garden, and sought her out.

“ I have been thinking about getting married,” he began abruptly ; “ and after having turned it all over, I have made up my mind it’s not worth while.”

She turned upon him for a single moment ; but his radiant, kindly appearance would, under the circumstances, have disconcerted an angel, and she looked down again upon the ground in silence. He could see her tremble.

“ I hope you don’t mind,” he went on, a little taken aback. “ You ought not. I have turned it all over, and upon my soul there’s nothing in it. We should never be one whit nearer than we are just now, and, if I am a wise man, nothing like so happy.”

“ It is unnecessary to go round about with me,” she said. “ I very well remember that you refused to commit yourself ; and now that I see you were mistaken, and in reality have never cared for me, I can only feel sad that I have been so far misled.”

“ I ask your pardon,” said Will stoutly ; “ you

do not understand my meaning. As to whether I have ever loved you or not, I must leave that to others. But for one thing, my feeling is not changed; and for another, you may make it your boast that you have made my whole life and character something different from what they were. I mean what I say; no less. I do not think getting married is worth while. I would rather you went on living with your father, so that I could walk over and see you once, or maybe twice a week, as people go to church, and then we should both be all the happier between whiles. That's my notion. But I'll marry you if you will," he added.

"Do you know that you are insulting me?" she broke out.

"Not I, Marjory," he said; "if there is anything in a clear conscience, not I. I offer all my heart's best affection; you can take it or want it, though I suspect it's beyond either your power or mine to change what has once been done, and set me fancy-free. I'll marry you, if you like; but I tell you again and again, it's not worth while, and we had best stay friends. Though I am a quiet man, I have noticed a heap of things in my life. Trust in me, and take things as I propose; or, if you don't like that, say the word, and I'll marry you out of hand."

There was a considerable pause, and Will, who began to feel uneasy, began to grow angry in consequence.

"It seems you are too proud to say your mind," he said. "Believe me that's a pity. A clean shrift makes simple living. Can a man be more downright or honourable to a woman than I have been? I have said my say, and given you your choice. Do you want me to marry you? or will you take my friendship, as I think best? or have you had enough of me for

good? Speak out for the dear God's sake! You know your father told you a girl should speak her mind in these affairs."

She seemed to recover herself at that, turned without a word, walked rapidly through the garden, and disappeared into the house, leaving Will in some confusion as to the result. He walked up and down the garden, whistling softly to himself. Sometimes he stopped and contemplated the sky and hill-tops; sometimes he went down to the tail of the weir and sat there, looking foolishly in the water. All this dubiety and perturbation was so foreign to his nature and the life which he had resolutely chosen for himself, that he began to regret Marjory's arrival. "After all," he thought, "I was as happy as a man need be. I could come down here and watch my fishes all day long if I wanted: I was as settled and contented as my old mill."

Marjory came down to dinner, looking very trim and quiet; and no sooner were all three at table than she made her father a speech, with her eyes fixed upon her plate, but showing no other sign of embarrassment or distress.

"Father," she began, "Mr. Will and I have been talking things over. We see that we have each made a mistake about our feelings, and he has agreed, at my request, to give up all idea of marriage, and be no more than my very good friend, as in the past. You see, there is no shadow of a quarrel, and indeed I hope we shall see a great deal of him in the future, for his visits will always be welcome in our house. Of course, father, you will know best, but perhaps we should do better to leave Mr. Will's house for the present. I believe, after what has passed, we should hardly be agreeable inmates for some days."

Will, who had commanded himself with difficulty from the first, broke out upon this into an inarticulate noise, and raised one hand with an appearance of real dismay, as if he were about to interfere and contradict. But she checked him at once, looking up at him with a swift glance and an angry flush upon her cheek.

“You will perhaps have the good grace,” she said, “to let me explain these matters for myself.”

Will was put entirely out of countenance by her expression and the ring of her voice. He held his peace, concluding that there were some things about this girl beyond his comprehension—in which he was exactly right.

The poor parson was quite crestfallen. He tried to prove that this was no more than a true lovers' tiff, which would pass off before night ; and when he was dislodged from that position, he went on to argue that where there was no quarrel there could be no call for a separation ; for the good man liked both his entertainment and his host. It was curious to see how the girl managed them, saying little all the time, and that very quietly, and yet twisting them round her finger and insensibly leading them wherever she would by feminine tact and generalship. It scarcely seemed to have been her doing—it seemed as if things had merely so fallen out—that she and her father took their departure that same afternoon in a farm-cart, and went farther down the valley, to wait, until their own house was ready for them, in another hamlet. But Will had been observing closely, and was well aware of her dexterity and resolution. When he found himself alone he had a great many curious matters to turn over in his mind. He was very sad and solitary, to begin with. All the interest had gone out of his life, and he might look up at the stars as long as he pleased, he

somehow failed to find support or consolation. And then he was in such a turmoil of spirit about Marjory. He had been puzzled and irritated at her behaviour, and yet he could not keep himself from admiring it. He thought he recognised a fine, perverse angel in that still soul which he had never hitherto suspected; and though he saw it was an influence that would fit but ill with his own life of artificial calm, he could not keep himself from ardently desiring to possess it. Like a man who has lived among shadows and now meets the sun, he was both pained and delighted.

As the days went forward he passed from one extreme to another; now pluming himself on the strength of his determination, now despising his timid and silly caution. The former was, perhaps, the true thought of his heart, and represented the regular tenor of the man's reflections; but the latter burst forth from time to time with an unruly violence, and then he would forget all consideration, and go up and down his house and garden or walk among the fir-woods like one who is beside himself with remorse. To equable, steady-minded Will, this state of matters was intolerable; and he determined, at whatever cost, to bring it to an end. So, one warm summer afternoon, he put on his best clothes, took a thorn switch in his hand, and set out down the valley by the river. As soon as he had taken his determination, he had regained at a bound his customary peace of heart, and he enjoyed the bright weather and the variety of the scene without any admixture of alarm or unpleasant eagerness. It was nearly the same to him how the matter turned out. If she accepted him he would have to marry her this time, which perhaps was all for the best. If she refused him, he would have done his utmost, and might follow his

own way in the future with an untroubled conscience. He hoped, on the whole, she would refuse him ; and then, again, as he saw the brown roof which sheltered her, peeping through some willows at an angle of the stream, he was half inclined to reverse the wish, and more than half ashamed of himself for this infirmity of purpose.

Marjory seemed glad to see him, and gave him her hand without affectation or delay.

"I have been thinking about this marriage," he began.

"So have I," she answered. "And I respect you more and more for a very wise man. You understood me better than I understood myself ; and I am now quite certain that things are all for the best as they are."

"At the same time——" ventured Will.

"You must be tired," she interrupted. "Take a seat and let me fetch you a glass of wine. The afternoon is so warm ; and I wish you not to be displeased with your visit. You must come quite often ; once a week, if you can spare the time ; I am always so glad to see my friends."

"Oh, very well," thought Will to himself. "It appears I was right after all." And he paid a very agreeable visit, walked home again in capital spirits, and gave himself no further concern about the matter.

For nearly three years Will and Marjory continued on these terms, seeing each other once or twice a week without any word of love between them ; and for all that time I believe Will was nearly as happy as a man can be. He rather stinted himself the pleasure of seeing her ; and he would often walk half-way over to the parsonage, and then back again, as if to whet his appetite. Indeed, there was one

corner of the road, whence he could see the church-spire wedged into a crevice of the valley between sloping fir-woods, with a triangular snatch of plain by way of background, which he greatly affected as a place to sit and moralise in before returning homewards; and the peasants got so much into the habit of finding him there in the twilight that they gave it the name of "Will o' the Mill's Corner."

At the end of the three years Marjory played him a sad trick by suddenly marrying somebody else. Will kept his countenance bravely, and merely remarked that, for as little as he knew of women, he had acted very prudently in not marrying her himself three years before. She plainly knew very little of her own mind, and, in spite of a deceptive manner, was as fickle and flighty as the rest of them. He had to congratulate himself on an escape, he said, and would take a higher opinion of his own wisdom in consequence. But at heart he was reasonably displeased, moped a good deal for a month or two, and fell away in flesh, to the astonishment of his serving-lads.

It was perhaps a year after this marriage that Will was awakened late one night by the sound of a horse galloping on the road, followed by precipitate knocking at the inn-door. He opened his window and saw a farm-servant, mounted and holding a led horse by the bridle, who told him to make what haste he could and go along with him; for Marjory was dying, and had sent urgently to fetch him to her bedside. Will was no horseman, and made so little speed upon the way that the poor young wife was very near the end before he arrived. But they had some minutes' talk in private, and he was present and wept very bitterly while she breathed her last.

DEATH

Year after year went away into nothing, with great explosions and outcries in the cities on the plain : red revolt springing up and being suppressed in blood, battle swaying hither and thither, patient astronomers in observatory towers picking out and christening new stars, plays being performed in lighted theatres, people being carried into hospital on stretchers, and all the usual turmoil and agitation of men's lives in crowded centres. Up in Will's valley only the wind and seasons made an epoch ; the fish hung in the swift stream, the birds circled overhead, the pine-tops rustled underneath the stars, the tall hills stood over all ; and Will went to and fro, minding his wayside inn, until the snow began to thicken on his head. His heart was young and vigorous ; and if his pulses kept a sober time, they still beat strong and steady in his wrists. He carried a ruddy stain on either cheek, like a ripe apple ; he stooped a little, but his step was still firm ; and his sinewy hands were reached out to all men with a friendly pressure. His face was covered with those wrinkles which are got in open air, and which, rightly looked at, are no more than a sort of permanent sunburning ; such wrinkles heighten the stupidity of stupid faces ; but to a person like Will, with his clear eyes and smiling mouth, only give another charm by testifying to a simple and easy life. His talk was full of wise sayings. He had a taste for other people ; and other people had a taste for him. When the valley was full of tourists in the season, there were merry nights in Will's arbour ; and his views, which seemed whimsical to his neighbours, were often enough admired by learned people out of towns and colleges. Indeed, he had a very noble old

age, and grew daily better known ; so that his fame was heard of in the cities of the plain ; and young men who had been summer travellers spoke together in cafés of Will o' the Mill and his rough philosophy. Many and many an invitation, you may be sure, he had ; but nothing could tempt him from his upland valley. He would shake his head and smile over his tobacco-pipe with a deal of meaning. " You come too late," he would answer. " I am a dead man now : I have lived and died already. Fifty years ago you would have brought my heart into my mouth ; and now you do not even tempt me. But that is the object of long living, that man should cease to care about life." And again : " There is only one difference between a long life and a good dinner : that, in the dinner, the sweets come last." Or once more : " When I was a boy I was a bit puzzled, and hardly knew whether it was myself or the world that was curious and worth looking into. Now, I know it is myself, and stick to that."

He never showed any symptom of frailty, but kept stalwart and firm to the last ; but they say he grew less talkative towards the end, and would listen to other people by the hour in an amused and sympathetic silence. Only, when he did speak, it was more to the point, and more charged with old experience. He drank a bottle of wine gladly ; above all, at sunset on the hill-top or quite late at night under the stars in the arbour. The sight of something attractive and unattainable seasoned his enjoyment, he would say ; and he professed he had lived long enough to admire a candle all the more when he could compare it with a planet.

One night, in his seventy-second year, he awoke in bed in such uneasiness of body and mind that he

arose and dressed himself and went out to meditate in the arbour. It was pitch dark, without a star; the river was swollen, and the wet woods and meadows loaded the air with perfume. It had thundered during the day, and it promised more thunder for the morrow. A murky, stifling night for a man of seventy-two! Whether it was the weather or the wakefulness or some little touch of fever in his old limbs, Will's mind was besieged by tumultuous and crying memories. His boyhood, the night with the fat young man, the death of his adopted parents, the summer days with Marjory, and many of those small circumstances, which seem nothing to another, and are yet the very gist of a man's own life to himself—things seen, words heard, looks misconstrued—arose from their forgotten corners and usurped his attention. The dead themselves were with him, not merely taking part in this thin show of memory that defiled before his brain, but revisiting his bodily senses as they do in profound and vivid dreams. The fat young man leaned his elbows on the table opposite; Marjory came and went with an apronful of flowers between the garden and the arbour; he could hear the old parson knocking out his pipe or blowing his resonant nose.* The tide of his consciousness ebbed and flowed: he was sometimes half-asleep and drowned in his recollections of the past: and sometimes he was broad awake, wondering at himself. But about the middle of the night he was startled by the voice of the dead miller calling to him out of the house as he used to do on the arrival of custom. The hallucination was so perfect that Will sprang from his seat and stood listening for the summons to be repeated; and as he listened he became conscious of another noise besides the brawling of the river and the ringing

in his feverish ears. It was like the stir of horses and the creaking of harness, as though a carriage with an impatient team had been brought up upon the road before the courtyard gate. At such an hour, upon this rough and dangerous pass, the supposition was no better than absurd; and Will dismissed it from his mind, and resumed his seat upon the arbour chair; and sleep closed over him again like running water. He was once again awakened by the dead miller's call, thinner and more spectral than before; and once again he heard the noise of an equipage upon the road. And so thrice and four times, the same dream, or the same fancy, presented itself to his senses: until at length, smiling to himself as when one humours a nervous child, he proceeded towards the gate to set his uncertainty at rest.

From the arbour to the gate was no great distance, and yet it took Will some time; it seemed as if the dead thickened around him in the court, and crossed his path at every step. For, first, he was suddenly surprised by an overpowering sweetness of heliotropes; it was as if his garden had been planted with this flower from end to end, and the hot, damp night had drawn forth all their perfumes in a breath. Now the heliotrope had been Marjory's favourite flower, and since her death not one of them had ever been planted in Will's ground.

"I must be going crazy," he thought. "Poor Marjory and her heliotropes!"

And with that he raised his eyes towards the window that had once been hers. If he had been bewildered before, he was now almost terrified; for there was a light in the room; the window was an orange oblong as of yore; and the corner of the blind was lifted and let fall as on the night when he stood

and shouted to the stars in his perplexity. The illusion only endured an instant ; but it left him somewhat unmanned, rubbing his eyes and staring at the outline of the house and the black night behind it. While he thus stood, and it seemed as if he must have stood there quite a long time, there came a renewal of the noises on the road : and he turned in time to meet a stranger, who was advancing to meet him across the court. There was something like the outline of a great carriage discernible on the road behind the stranger, and, above that, a few black pine-tops, like so many plumes.

“ Master Will ? ” asked the new-comer, in brief military fashion.

“ That same, sir,” answered Will. “ Can I do anything to serve you ? ”

“ I have heard you much spoken of, Master Will,” returned the other ; “ much spoken of, and well. And though I have both hands full of business, I wish to drink a bottle of wine with you in your arbour. Before I go, I shall introduce myself.”

Will led the way to the trellis, and got a lamp lighted and a bottle uncorked. He was not altogether unused to such complimentary interviews, and hoped little enough from this one, being schooled by many disappointments. A sort of cloud had settled on his wits and prevented him from remembering the strangeness of the hour. He moved like a person in his sleep ; and it seemed as if the lamp caught fire and the bottle came uncorked with the facility of thought. Still, he had some curiosity about the appearance of his visitor, and tried in vain to turn the light into his face ; either he handled the lamp clumsily, or there was a dimness over his eyes ; but he could make out little more than a shadow at table with him. He

stared and stared at this shadow, as he wiped out the glasses, and began to feel cold and strange about the heart. The silence weighed upon him, for he could hear nothing now, not even the river, but the drumming of his own arteries in his ears.

"Here's to you," said the stranger roughly.

"Here is my service, sir," replied Will, sipping his wine, which somehow tasted oddly.

"I understand you are a very positive fellow," pursued the stranger.

Will made answer with a smile of some satisfaction and a little nod.

"So am I," continued the other; "and it is the delight of my heart to tramp on people's corns. I will have nobody positive but myself; not one. I have crossed the whims, in my time, of kings and generals and great artists. And what would you say," he went on, "if I had come up here on purpose to cross yours?"

Will had it on his tongue to make a sharp rejoinder; but the politeness of an old innkeeper prevailed; and he held his peace and made answer with a civil gesture of the hand.

"I have," said the stranger. "And if I did not hold you in a particular esteem, I should make no words about the matter. It appears you pride yourself on staying where you are. You mean to stick by your inn. Now I mean you shall come for a turn with me in my barouche; and before this bottle's empty, so you shall."

"That would be an odd thing, to be sure," replied Will, with a chuckle. "Why, sir, I have grown here like an old oak-tree; the devil himself could hardly root me up: and for all I perceive you are a very entertaining old gentleman, I would wager you another bottle you lose your pains with me."

The dimness of Will's eyesight had been increasing all this while ; but he was somehow conscious of a sharp and chilling scrutiny which irritated and yet overmastered him.

" You need not think," he broke out suddenly, in an explosive, febrile manner that startled and alarmed himself, " that I am a stay-at-home because I fear anything under God. God knows I am tired enough of it all ; and when the time comes for a longer journey than ever you dream of, I reckon I shall find myself prepared."

The stranger emptied his glass and pushed it away from him. He looked down for a little, and then, leaning over the table, tapped Will three times upon the forearm with a single finger. " The time has come ! " he said solemnly.

An ugly thrill spread from the spot he touched. The tones of his voice were dull and startling, and echoed strangely in Will's heart.

" I beg your pardon," he said, with some discomposure. " What do you mean ? "

" Look at me, and you will find your eyesight swim. Raise your hand ; it is dead-heavy. This is your last bottle of wine, Master Will, and your last night upon the earth."

" You are a doctor ? " quavered Will.

" The best that ever was," replied the other ; " for I cure both mind and body with the same prescription. I take away all pain and I forgive all sins ; and where my patients have gone wrong in life, I smooth out all complications and set them free again upon their feet."

" I have no need of you," said Will.

" A time comes for all men, Master Will," replied the doctor, " when the helm is taken out of their

hands. For you, because you were prudent and quiet, it has been long of coming, and you have had long to discipline yourself for its reception. You have seen what is to be seen about your mill; you have sat close all your days like a hare in its form; but now that is at an end; and," added the doctor, getting on his feet, "you must arise and come with me."

"You are a strange physician," said Will, looking steadfastly upon his guest.

"I am a natural law," he replied, "and people call me Death."

"Why did you not tell me so at first?" cried Will. "I have been waiting for you these many years. Give me your hand, and welcome."

"Lean upon my arm," said the stranger, "for already your strength abates. Lean on me as heavily as you need; for though I am old, I am very strong. It is but three steps to my carriage, and there all your trouble ends. Why, Will," he added, "I have been yearning for you as if you were my own son; and of all the men that ever I came for in my long days, I have come for you most gladly. I am caustic, and sometimes offend people at first sight; but I am a good friend at heart to such as you."

"Since Marjory was taken," returned Will, "I declare before God you were the only friend I had to look for."

So the pair went arm-in-arm across the courtyard.

One of the servants awoke about this time and heard the noise of horses pawing before he dropped asleep again; all down the valley that night there was a rushing as of a smooth and steady wind descending towards the plain; and when the world rose next morning, sure enough Will o' the Mill had gone at last upon his travels.

V

THE BATTLE OF SHOREBY

(The Black Arrow)

THE SHRILL TRUMPET

VERY early the next morning, before the first peep of the day, Dick arose, changed his garments, armed himself once more like a gentleman, and set forth for Lawless's den in the forest. There, it will be remembered, he had left Lord Foxham's papers ; and to get these and be back in time for the tryst with the young Duke of Gloucester could only be managed by an early start, and the most vigorous walking.

The frost was more rigorous than ever ; the air windless and dry, and stinging to the nostril. The moon had gone down, but the stars were still bright and numerous, and the reflection from the snow was clear and cheerful. There was no need for a lamp to walk by ; nor, in that still but ringing air, the least temptation to delay.

Dick had crossed the greater part of the open ground between Shoreby and the forest, and had reached the bottom of the little hill, some hundred yards below the Cross of St. Bride, when, through the stillness of the black morn, there rang forth the note of a trumpet, so shrill, clear, and piercing, that he thought he had never heard the match of it for audibility. It was blown once, and then hurriedly a second time ; and then the clash of steel succeeded.

At this young Shelton pricked his ears, and drawing his sword, ran forward up the hill.

Presently he came in sight of the cross, and was

aware of a most fierce encounter raging on the road before it. There were seven or eight assailants, and but one to keep head against them; but so active and dexterous was this one, so desperately did he charge and scatter his opponents, so deftly keep his footing on the ice, that already, before Dick could intervene, he had slain one, wounded another, and kept the whole in check.

Still, it was by a miracle that he continued his defence, and at any moment, any accident, the least slip of foot or error of hand, his life would be a forfeit.

“Hold ye well, sir! Here is help!” cried Richard; and forgetting that he was alone, and that the cry was somewhat irregular, “To the Arrow! to the Arrow!” he shouted, as he fell upon the rear of the assailants.

These were stout fellows also, for they gave not an inch at this surprise, but faced about, and fell with astonishing fury upon Dick. Four against one, the steel flashed about him in the starlight; the sparks flew fiercely; one of the men opposed to him fell—in the stir of the fight he hardly knew why; then he himself was struck across the head, and though the steel cap below his hood protected him, the blow beat him down upon one knee, with a brain whirling like a windmill-sail.

Meanwhile the man whom he had come to rescue, instead of joining in the conflict, had, on the first sign of intervention, leaped aback and blown again, and yet more urgently and loudly, on the same shrill-voiced trumpet that began the alarm. Next moment, indeed, his foes were on him, and he was once more charging and fleeing, leaping, stabbing, dropping to his knee, and using indifferently sword and dagger,

foot and hand, with the same unshaken courage and feverish energy and speed.

But that ear-piercing summons had been heard at last. There was a muffled rushing in the snow ; and in a good hour for Dick, who saw the sword-points glitter already at his throat, there poured forth out of the wood upon both sides a disorderly torrent of mounted men-at-arms, each cased in iron, and with visor lowered, each bearing his lance in rest, or his sword bared and raised, and each carrying, so to speak, a passenger, in the shape of an archer or page, who leaped one after another from their perches, and had presently doubled the array.

The original assailants, seeing themselves outnumbered and surrounded, threw down their arms without a word.

“Seize me these fellows !” said the hero of the trumpet ; and when his order had been obeyed, he drew near to Dick and looked him in the face.

Dick, returning this scrutiny, was surprised to find in one who had displayed such strength, skill, and energy, a lad no older than himself—slightly deformed, with one shoulder higher than the other, and of a pale, painful, and distorted countenance.¹ The eyes, however, were very clear and bold.

“Sir,” said this lad, “ye came in good time for me, and none too early.”

“My lord,” returned Dick, with a faint sense that he was in the presence of a great personage, “ye are yourself so marvellous a good swordsman that I believe ye had managed them single-handed. Howbeit, it was certainly well for me that your men delayed no longer than they did.”

¹ Richard Crookback would have been really far younger at this date.

“How knew ye who I was?” demanded the stranger.

“Even now, my lord,” Dick answered, “I am ignorant of whom I speak with.”

“Is it so?” asked the other. “And yet ye threw yourself head first into this unequal battle.”

“I saw one man valiantly contending against many,” replied Dick, “and I had thought myself dishonoured not to bear him aid.”

A singular sneer played about the young nobleman’s mouth as he made answer :

“These are very brave words. But to the more essential—are ye Lancaster or York?”

“My lord, I make no secret ; I am clear for York,” Dick answered.

“By the mass !” replied the other, “it is well for you.”

And so saying, he turned towards one of his followers.

“Let me see,” he continued, in the same sneering and cruel tones—“let me see a clean end of these brave gentlemen. Truss me them up.”

There were but five survivors of the attacking party. Archers seized them by the arms ; they were hurried to the borders of the wood, and each placed below a tree of suitable dimensions ; the rope was adjusted ; an archer, carrying the end of it, hastily clambered overhead, and before a minute was over and without a word passing upon either hand, the five men were swinging by the neck.

“And now,” cried the deformed leader, “back to your posts, and when I summon you next, be readier to attend.”

“My lord duke,” said one man, “beseech you, tarry not here alone. Keep but a handful of lances at your hand.”

“Fellow,” said the duke, “I have forborne to chide you for your slowness. Cross me not, therefore. I trust my hand and arm, for all that I be crooked. Ye were backward when the trumpet sounded: and ye are now too forward with your counsels. But it is ever so; last with the lance and first with the tongue. Let it be reversed.”

And with a gesture that was not without a sort of dangerous nobility, he waved them off.

The footmen climbed again to their seats behind the men-at-arms, and the whole party moved slowly away and disappeared in twenty different directions, under the cover of the forest.

The day was by this time beginning to break, and the stars to fade. The first grey glimmer of dawn shone upon the countenances of the two young men, who now turned once more to face each other.

“Here,” said the duke, “ye have seen my vengeance, which is, like my blade, both sharp and ready. But I would not have you, for all Christendom, suppose me thankless. You that came to my aid with a good sword and a better courage—unless that ye recoil from my mis-shapeness—come to my heart.”

And so saying, the young leader held out his arms for an embrace.

In the bottom of his heart Dick already entertained a great terror and some hatred for the man whom he had rescued; but the invitation was so worded that it would not have been merely discourteous, but cruel, to refuse or hesitate, and he hastened to comply.

“And now, my lord duke,” he said, when he had regained his freedom, “do I suppose aright? Are ye my Lord Duke of Gloucester?”

“ I am Richard of Gloucester,” returned the other.
“ And you—how call they you ? ”

Dick told him his name, and presented Lord Foxham’s signet, which the duke immediately recognised.

“ Ye come too soon,” he said ; “ but why should I complain ? Ye are like me, that was here at watch two hours before the day. But this is the first sally of mine arms ; upon this adventure, Master Shelton, shall I make or mar the quality of my renown. There lie mine enemies, under two old, skilled captains, Risingham and Brackley, well posted for strength, I do believe, but yet upon two sides without retreat, enclosed betwixt the sea, the harbour, and the river. Methinks, Shelton, here were a great blow to be stricken, an we could strike it silently and suddenly.”

“ I do think so, indeed,” cried Dick, warming.

“ Have ye my Lord Foxham’s notes ? ” inquired the duke.

And then Dick, having explained how he was without them for the moment, made himself bold to offer information every jot as good, of his own knowledge.

“ And for mine own part, my lord duke,” he added, “ an ye had men enough, I would fall on even*at this present. For, look ye, at the peep of day the watches of the night are over ; but by day they keep neither watch nor ward—only scour the outskirts with horsemen. Now, then, when the night-watch is already unarmed, and the rest are at their morning cup—now were the time to break them.”

“ How many do ye count ? ” asked Gloucester.

“ They number not two thousand,” Dick replied.

“ I have seven hundred in the woods behind us,” said the duke ; “ seven hundred follow from Kettley,

and will be here anon ; behind these, and farther, are four hundred more ; and my Lord Foxham hath five hundred half a day from here, at Holywood. Shall we attend their coming or fall on ? ”

“ My lord,” said Dick, “ when ye hanged these five poor rogues ye did decide the question. Churls although they were, in these uneasy times they will be lacked and looked for, and the alarm be given. Therefore, my lord, if ye do count upon the advantage of a surprise, ye have not, in my poor opinion, one whole hour in front of you.”

“ I do think so indeed,” returned Crookback. “ Well, before an hour ye shall be in the thick on’t, winning spurs. A swift man to Holywood, carrying Lord Foxham’s signet ; another along the road to speed my laggards ! Nay, Shelton, by the rood, it may be done ! ”

Therewith he once more set his trumpet to his lips and blew.

This time he was not long kept waiting. In a moment the open space about the cross was filled with horse and foot. Richard of Gloucester took his place upon the steps, and despatched messenger after messenger to hasten the concentration of the seven hundred men that lay hidden in the immediate neighbourhood among the woods ; and before a quarter of an hour had passed, all his dispositions being taken, he put himself at their head, and began to move down the hill towards Shoreby.

His plan was simple. He was to seize a quarter of the town of Shoreby lying on the right hand of the high-road, and make his position good there in the narrow lanes until his reinforcements followed.

If Lord Risingham chose to retreat, Richard would follow upon his rear, and take him between two fires ;

or, if he preferred to hold the town, he would be shut in a trap, there to be gradually overwhelmed by force of numbers.

There was but one danger, but that was imminent and great—Gloucester's seven hundred might be rolled up and cut to pieces in the first encounter, and, to avoid this, it was needful to make the surprise of their arrival as complete as possible.

The footmen, therefore, were all once more taken up behind the riders, and Dick had the signal honour meted out to him of mounting behind Gloucester himself. For as far as there was any cover the troops moved slowly, and when they came near the end of the trees that lined the highway, stopped to breathe and reconnoitre.

The sun was now well up, shining with a frosty brightness out of a yellow halo, and right over against the luminary, Shoreby, a field of snowy roofs and ruddy gables, was rolling up its columns of morning smoke.

Gloucester turned round to Dick.

"In that poor place," he said, "where people are cooking breakfast, either you shall gain your spurs and I begin a life of mighty honour and glory in the world's eye, or both of us, as I conceive it, shall fall dead and be unheard of. Two Richards are we. Well then, Richard Shelton, they shall be heard about, these two! Their swords shall not ring more loudly on men's helmets than their names shall ring in people's ears."

Dick was astonished at so great a hunger after fame, expressed with so great vehemence of voice and language; and he answered very sensibly and quietly, that, for his part, he promised he would do his duty, and doubted not of victory if every one did the like.

By this time the horses were well breathed, and the leader holding up his sword and giving rein, the whole troop of chargers broke into the gallop and thundered, with their double load of fighting men, down the remainder of the hill and across the snow-covered plain that still divided them from Shoreby.

THE BATTLE OF SHOREBY

The whole distance to be crossed was not above a quarter of a mile. But they had no sooner debouched beyond the cover of the trees than they were aware of people fleeing and screaming in the snowy meadows upon either hand. Almost at the same moment a great rumour began to arise, and spread and grow continually louder in the town; and they were not yet half-way to the nearest house before the bells began to ring backward from the steeple.

The young duke ground his teeth together. By these so early signals of alarm he feared to find his enemies prepared; and if he failed to gain a footing in the town, he knew that his small party would soon be broken and exterminated in the open.

In the town, however, the Lancastrians were far from being in so good a posture. It was as Dick had said. The night-guard had already doffed their harness; the rest were still hanging—unlatched, unbraced, all unprepared for battle—about their quarters; and in the whole of Shoreby there were not, perhaps, fifty men full armed, or fifty chargers to be mounted.

The beating of the bells, the terrifying summons of men who ran about the streets crying and beating upon the doors, aroused in an incredibly short space at least two score out of that half hundred. These got

speedily to horse, and, the alarm still flying wild and contrary, galloped in different directions.

Thus it befell that, when Richard of Gloucester reached the first house of Shoreby, he was met in the mouth of the street by a mere handful of lances, whom he swept before his onset as the storm chases the bark.

A hundred paces into the town, Dick Shelton touched the duke's arm; the duke, in answer, gathered his reins, put the shrill trumpet to his mouth, and blowing a concerted point, turned to the right hand out of the direct advance. Swerving like a single rider, his whole command turned after him, and, still at the full gallop of the chargers, swept up the narrow by-street. Only the last score of riders drew rein and faced about in the entrance; the footmen, whom they carried behind them, leapt at the same instant to the earth, and began, some to bend their bows, and others to break into and secure the houses upon either hand.

Surprised at this sudden change of direction, and daunted by the firm front of the rear-guard, the few Lancastrians, after a momentary consultation, turned and rode farther into town to seek for reinforcements.

The quarter of the town upon which, by the advice of Dick, Richard of Gloucester had now seized, consisted of five small streets of poor and ill-inhabited houses, occupying a very gentle eminence, and lying open towards the back.

The five streets being each secured by a good guard, the reserve would thus occupy the centre, out of shot, and yet ready to carry aid wherever it was needed.

Such was the poorness of the neighbourhood that none of the Lancastrian lords, and but few of their retainers, had been lodged therein; and the

inhabitants, with one accord, deserted their houses and fled, squalling, along the streets or over garden walls.

In the centre, where the five ways all met, a somewhat ill-favoured alehouse displayed the sign of the "Chequers"; and here the Duke of Gloucester chose his headquarters for the day.

To Dick he assigned the guard of one of the five streets.

"Go," he said, "win your spurs. Win glory for me; one Richard for another. I tell you, if I rise, ye shall rise by the same ladder. Go," he added, shaking him by the hand.

But, as soon as Dick was gone, he turned to a little shabby archer at his elbow.

"Go, Dutton, and that right speedily," he added. "Follow that lad. If ye find him faithful, ye answer for his safety, a head for a head. Woe unto you if ye return without him! But if he be faithless—or, for one instant, ye misdoubt him—stab him from behind."

In the meantime Dick hastened to secure his post. The street he had to guard was very narrow, and closely lined with houses, which projected and overhung the roadway; but narrow and dark as it was, since it opened upon the market-place of the town, the main issue of the battle would probably fall to be decided on that spot.

The market-place was full of townspeople fleeing in disorder; but there was as yet no sign of any foeman ready to attack, and Dick judged he had some time before him to make ready his defence.

The two houses at the end stood deserted, with open doors, as the inhabitants had left them in their flight, and from these he had the furniture hastily tossed forth and piled into a barrier in the entry of

the lane. A hundred men were placed at his disposal, and of these he threw the more part in the houses, where they might lie in shelter and deliver their arrows from the windows. With the rest, under his own immediate eye, he lined the barricade.

Meanwhile the utmost uproar and confusion had continued to prevail throughout the town; and what with the hurried clashing of bells, the sounding of trumpets, the swift movement of bodies of horse, the cries of the commanders, and the shrieks of women, the noise was almost deafening to the ear. Presently, little by little, the tumult began to subside; and soon after, files of men in armour and bodies of archers began to assemble and form in line of battle in the market-place.

A large portion of this body were in murrey and blue, and in the mounted knight who ordered their array Dick recognised Sir Daniel Brackley.

Then there befell a long pause, which was followed by the almost simultaneous sounding of four trumpets from four different quarters of the town. A fifth rang in answer from the market-place, and at the same moment the files began to move, and a shower of arrows rattled about the barricade, and sounded like blows upon the walls of the two flanking houses.

The attack had begun, by a common signal, on all the five issues of the quarter. Gloucester was beleaguered upon every side; and Dick judged, if he would make good his post, he must rely on the hundred men of his command.

Seven volleys of arrows followed one upon the other, and in the very thick of the discharges Dick was touched from behind upon the arm, and found a page holding out to him a leathern jack, strengthened with bright plates of mail.

“It is from my Lord of Gloucester,” said the page. “He hath observed, Sir Richard, that ye went unarmed.”

Dick, with a glow at his heart at being so addressed, got to his feet and, with the assistance of the page, donned the defensive coat. Even as he did so, two arrows rattled harmlessly upon the plates, and a third struck down the page, mortally wounded, at his feet.

Meantime the whole body of the enemy had been steadily drawing nearer across the market-place ; and by this time were so close at hand, that Dick gave the order to return their shot. Immediately, from behind the barrier and from the windows of the houses, a counterblast of arrows sped, carrying death. But the Lancastrians, as if they had but waited for a signal, shouted loudly in answer ; and began to close at a run upon the barrier, the horsemen still hanging back, with visors lowered.

Then followed an obstinate and deadly struggle, hand to hand. The assailants, wielding their falchions with one hand, strove with the other to drag down the structure of the barricade. On the other side, the parts were reversed ; and the defenders exposed themselves like madmen to protect their rampart. So for some minutes the contest raged almost in silence, friend and foe falling one upon another. But it is always the easier to destroy ; and when a single note upon the tucket recalled the attacking party from this desperate service, much of the barricade had been removed piecemeal, and the whole fabric had sunk to half its height, and tottered to a general fall.

And now the footmen in the market-place fell back, at a run, on every side. The horsemen, who had been standing in a line two deep, wheeled suddenly, and made their flank into their front ; and as swift as a

“Nay, they follow him gleefully,” replied the other; “for if he be exact to punish, he is most open-handed to reward. And if he spare not the blood and sweat of others, he is ever liberal of his own, still in the first front of battle, still the last to sleep. He will go far, will Crookback Dick o’ Gloucester!”

The young knight, if he had before been brave and vigilant, was now all the more inclined to watchfulness and courage. His sudden favour, he began to perceive, had brought perils in its train. And he turned from the archer, and once more scanned anxiously the market-place. It lay empty as before.

“I like not this quietude,” he said. “Doubtless they prepare us some surprise.”

And, as if in answer to his remark, the archers began once more to advance against the barricade, and the arrows to fall thick. But there was something hesitating in the attack. They came not on roundly, but seemed rather to wait a further signal.

Dick looked uneasily about him, spying for a hidden danger. And sure enough, about half-way up the little street, a door was suddenly opened from within and the house continued, for some seconds and both by door and window, to disgorge a torrent of Lancastrian archers. These, as they leaped down, hurriedly stood to their ranks, bent their bows, and proceeded to pour upon Dick’s rear a flight of arrows.

At the same time, the assailants in the market-place redoubled their shot, and began to close in stoutly upon the barricade.

Dick called down his whole command out of the houses, and facing them both ways, and encouraging their valour both by word and gesture, returned as best he could the double shower of shafts that fell about his post.

Meanwhile house after house was opened in the street, and the Lancastrians continued to pour out of the doors and leap down from the windows, shouting victory, until the number of enemies upon Dick's rear was almost equal to the number in his face. It was plain that he could hold the post no longer; what was worse, even if he could have held it, it had now become useless; and the whole Yorkist army lay in a posture of helplessness upon the brink of a complete disaster.

The men behind him formed the vital flaw in the general defence; and it was upon these that Dick turned, charging at the head of his men. So vigorous was the attack that the Lancastrian archers gave ground and staggered, and, at last, breaking their ranks, began to crowd back into the houses from which they had so recently and so vaingloriously sallied.

Meanwhile the men from the market-place had swarmed across the undefended barricade, and fell on hotly upon the other side; and Dick must once again face about, and proceed to drive them back. Once again the spirit of his men prevailed; they cleared the street in a triumphant style, but even as they did so the others issued again out of the houses, and took them, a third time, upon the rear.

The Yorkists began to be scattered; several times Dick found himself alone among his foes and plying his bright sword for life; several times he was conscious of a hurt. And meanwhile the fight swayed to and fro in the street without determinate result.

Suddenly Dick was aware of a great trumpeting about the outskirts of the town. The war-cry of York began to be rolled up to heaven, as by many and triumphant voices. And at the same time the men in front of him began to give ground rapidly,

streaming out of the street and back upon the market-place. Some one gave the word to fly. Trumpets were blown distractedly, some for a rally, some to charge. It was plain that a great blow had been struck, and the Lancastrians were thrown, at least for the moment, into full disorder, and some degree of panic.

And then, like a theatre trick, there followed the last act of Shoreby Battle. The men in front of Richard turned tail, like a dog that has been whistled home, and fled like the wind. At the same moment there came through the market-place a storm of horsemen, fleeing and pursuing, the Lancastrians turning back to strike with the sword, the Yorkists riding them down at the point of the lance.

Conspicuous in the mellay, Dick beheld the Crookback. He was already giving a foretaste of that furious valour and skill to cut his way across the ranks of war, which, years afterwards, upon the field of Bosworth, and when he was stained with crimes, almost sufficed to change the fortunes of the day and the destiny of the English throne. Evading, striking, riding down, he so forced and so manœuvred his strong horse, so aptly defended himself, and so liberally scattered death to his opponents, that he was now far ahead of the foremost of his knights, hewing his way, with the truncheon of a bloody sword, to where Lord Risingham was rallying the bravest. A moment more and they had met ; the tall, splendid, and famous warrior against the deformed and sickly boy.

Yet Shelton had never a doubt of the result ; and when the fight next opened for a moment, the figure of the earl had disappeared ; but still, in the first of the danger, Crookback Dick was launching his big horse and plying the truncheon of his sword.

Thus, by Shelton's courage in holding the mouth of the street against the first attack, and by the opportune arrival of his seven hundred reinforcements, the lad, who was afterwards to be handed down to the execration of posterity under the name of Richard III., had won his first considerable fight.

VI

THE ISLET

(Kidnapped)

WITH my stepping ashore I began the most unhappy part of my adventures. It was half-past twelve in the morning, and though the wind was broken by the land, it was a cold night. I dared not sit down (for I thought I should have frozen), but took off my shoes and walked to and fro upon the sand, barefoot, and beating my breast with infinite weariness. There was no sound of man or cattle; not a cock crew, though it was about the hour of their first waking; only the surf broke outside in the distance, which put me in mind of my perils and those of my friend. To walk by the sea at that hour of the morning, and in a place so desert-like and so lonesome, struck me with a kind of fear.

As soon as the day began to break I put on my shoes and climbed a hill—the ruggedest scramble I ever undertook—falling, the whole way, between big blocks of granite, or leaping from one to another. When I got to the top the dawn was come. There was no sign of the brig, which must have lifted from

the reef and sunk. The boat, too, was nowhere to be seen. There was never a sail upon the ocean ; and in what I could see of the land was neither house nor man.

I was afraid to think what had befallen my ship-mates, and afraid to look longer at so empty a scene. What with my wet clothes and weariness, and my belly, that now began to ache with hunger, I had enough to trouble me without that. So I set off eastward along the south coast, hoping to find a house where I might warm myself, and perhaps get news of those I had lost. And at the worst, I considered the sun would soon rise and dry my clothes.

After a little, my way was stopped by a creek or inlet of the sea, which seemed to run pretty deep into the land ; and as I had no means to get across, I must needs change my direction to go about the end of it. It was still the roughest kind of walking ; indeed the whole, not only of Earraid, but of the neighbouring part of Mull (which they call the Ross) is nothing but a jumble of granite rocks with heather in among. At first the creek kept narrowing as I had looked to see ; but presently to my surprise it began to widen out again. At this I scratched my head, but had still no notion of the truth ; until at last I came to a rising ground, and it burst upon me all in a moment that I was cast upon a little barren isle, and cut off on every side by the salt seas.

Instead of the sun rising to dry me, it came on to rain, with a thick mist ; so that my case was lamentable.

I stood in the rain, and shivered, and wondered what to do, till it occurred to me that perhaps the creek was fordable. Back I went to the narrowest point and waded in. But not three yards from shore

I plumped in head over ears ; and if ever I was heard of more, it was rather by God's grace than my own prudence. I was no wetter (for that could hardly be), but I was all the colder for this mishap ; and having lost another hope was the more unhappy.

And now, all at once, the yard came in my head. What had carried me through the roost would surely serve me to cross this little quiet creek in safety. With that I set off, undaunted, across the top of the isle, to fetch and carry it back. It was a weary tramp in all ways, and if hope had not buoyed me up, I must have cast myself down and given up. Whether with the sea salt, or because I was growing fevered, I was distressed with thirst, and had to stop, as I went, and drink the peaty water out of the hags.

I came to the bay at last, more dead than alive ; and at the first glance I thought the yard was something farther out than when I left it. In I went, for the third time, into the sea. The sand was smooth and firm, and shelved gradually down, so that I could wade out till the water was almost to my neck and the little waves splashed into my face. But at that depth my feet began to leave me, and I durst venture in no farther. As for the yard, I saw it bobbing very quietly some twenty feet beyond.

I had borne up well until this last disappointment ; but at that I came ashore, and flung myself down upon the sands and wept.

The time I spent upon the island is still so horrible a thought to me, that I must pass it lightly over. In all the books I have read of people cast away, they had either their pockets full of tools, or a chest of things would be thrown upon the beach along with them, as if on purpose. My case was very different. I had nothing in my pockets but money and Alan's

silver button ; and, being inland bred, I was as much short of knowledge as of means.

I knew indeed that shell-fish were counted good to eat ; and among the rocks of the isle I found a great plenty of limpets, which at first I could scarcely strike from their places, not knowing quickness to be needful. There were, besides, some of the little shells that we call buckies ; I think periwinkle is the English name. Of these two I made my whole diet, devouring them cold and raw as I found them ; and so hungry was I that at first they seemed to me delicious.

Perhaps they were out of season, or perhaps there was something wrong in the sea about my island. But at least I had no sooner eaten my first meal than I was seized with giddiness and retching, and lay for a long time no better than dead. A second trial of the same food (indeed I had no other) did better with me, and revived my strength. But as long as I was on the island, I never knew what to expect when I had eaten ; sometimes all was well, and sometimes I was thrown into a miserable sickness ; nor could I ever distinguish what particular fish it was that hurt me.

All day it streamed rain ; the island ran like a sop, there was no dry spot to be found ; and when I lay down that night, between two boulders that made a kind of roof, my feet were in a bog.

The second day I crossed the island to all sides. There was no one part of it better than another ; it was all desolate and rocky ; nothing living on it but game birds which I lacked the means to kill, and the gulls which haunted the outlying rocks in a prodigious number. But the creek, or strait, that cut off the isle from the main land of the Ross, opened out on the north into a bay, and the bay again opened into the

sound of Iona ; and it was the neighbourhood of this place that I chose to be my home ; though if I had thought upon the very name of home in such a spot, I must have burst out weeping.

I had good reasons for my choice. There was in this part of the isle a little hut of a house like a pig's hut, where fishers used to sleep when they came there upon their business ; but the turf roof of it had fallen entirely in ; so that the hut was of no use to me, and gave me less shelter than my rocks. What was more important, the shell-fish on which I lived grew there in great plenty ; when the tide was out I could gather a peck at a time : and this was doubtless a convenience. But the other reason went deeper. I had become in no way used to the horrid solitude of the isle, but still looked round me on all sides (like a man that was hunted), between fear and hope that I might see some human creature coming. Now, from a little up the hill-side over the bay, I could catch a sight of the great, ancient church and the roofs of the people's houses in Iona. And on the other hand, over the low country of the Ross, I saw smoke go up, morning and evening, as if from a homestead in a hollow of the land.

I used to watch this smoke, when I was wet and cold, and had my head half turned with loneliness ; and think of the fireside and the company, till my heart burned. It was the same with the roofs of Iona. Altogether, this sight I had of men's homes and comfortable lives, although it put a point on my own sufferings, yet it kept hope alive, and helped me to eat my raw shell-fish (which had soon grown to be a disgust) and saved me from the sense of horror I had whenever I was quite alone with dead rocks, and fowls, and the rain, and the cold sea.

I say it kept hope alive ; and indeed it seemed impossible that I should be left to die on the shores of my own country, and within view of a church tower and the smoke of men's houses. But the second day passed ; and though as long as the light lasted I kept a bright look-out for boats on the Sound or men passing on the Ross, no help came near me. It still rained, and I turned in to sleep, as wet as ever, and with a cruel sore throat, but a little comforted, perhaps, by having said good-night to my next neighbours, the people of Iona.

Charles the Second declared a man could stay outdoors more days in the year in the climate of England than in any other. This was very like a king, with a palace at his back and changes of dry clothes. But he must have had better luck on his flight from Worcester than I had on that miserable isle. It was the height of the summer ; yet it rained for more than twenty-four hours, and did not clear until the afternoon of the third day.

This was the day of incidents. In the morning I saw a red deer, a buck with a fine spread of antlers, standing in the rain on the top of the island ; but he had scarce seen me rise from under my rock, before he trotted off upon the other side. I supposed he must have swum the strait ; though what should bring any creature to Earraid was more than I could fancy.

A little after, as I was jumping about after my limpets, I was startled by a guinea-piece, which fell upon a rock in front of me and glanced off into the sea. When the sailors gave me my money again, they kept back not only about a third of the whole sum, but my father's leather purse ; so that from that day out, I carried my gold loose in a pocket with a

button. I now saw there must be a hole, and clapped my hand to the place in a great hurry. But this was to lock the stable-door after the steed was stolen. I had left the shore at Queensferry with near on fifty pounds; now I found no more than two guinea-pieces and a silver shilling.

It is true I picked up a third guinea a little after, where it lay shining on a piece of turf. That made a fortune of three pounds and four shillings, English money, for a lad, the rightful heir of an estate, and now starving on an isle at the extreme end of the wild Highlands.

This state of my affairs dashed me still further; and indeed my plight on that third morning was truly pitiful. My clothes were beginning to rot; my stockings in particular were quite worn through, so that my shanks went naked; my hands had grown quite soft with the continual soaking; my throat was very sore, my strength had much abated, and my heart so turned against the horrid stuff I was condemned to eat, that the very sight of it came near to sicken me.

And yet the worst was not yet come.

There is a pretty high rock on the north-west of Earraid, which (because it had a flat top and overlooked the Sound) I was much in the habit of frequenting; not that ever I stayed in one place, save when asleep, my misery giving me no rest. Indeed, I wore myself down with continual and aimless goings and comings in the rain.

As soon, however, as the sun came out, I lay down on the top of that rock to dry myself. The comfort of the sunshine is a thing I cannot tell. It set me thinking hopefully of my deliverance, of which I had begun to despair; and I scanned the sea and the Ross

with a fresh interest. On the south of my rock, a part of the island jutted out and hid the open ocean, so that a boat could thus come quite near me upon that side, and I be none the wiser.

Well, all of a sudden, a coble with a brown sail and a pair of fishers aboard of it, came flying round that corner of the isle, bound for Iona. I shouted out, and then fell on my knees on the rock and reached up my hands and prayed to them. They were near enough to hear—I could even see the colour of their hair; and there was no doubt but they observed me, for they cried out in the Gaelic tongue, and laughed. But the boat never turned aside, and flew on, right before my eyes, for Iona.

I could not believe such wickedness, and ran along the shore from rock to rock, crying on them piteously; even after they were out of reach of my voice, I still cried and waved to them; and when they were quite gone, I thought my heart would have burst. All the time of my troubles I wept only twice. Once, when I could not reach the yard, and now, the second time, when these fishers turned a deaf ear to my cries. But this time I wept and roared like a wicked child, tearing up the turf with my nails, and grinding my face in the earth. If a wish would kill men, those two fishers would never have seen morning, and I should likely have died upon my island.

When I was a little over my anger, I must eat again, but with such loathing of the mess as I could now scarce control. Sure enough, I should have done as well to fast, for my fishes poisoned me again. I had all my first pains; my throat was so sore I could scarce swallow; I had a fit of strong shuddering, which clucked my teeth together; and there came on me that dreadful sense of illness which we have no name

for either in Scots or English. I thought I should have died, and made my peace with God, forgiving all men, even my uncle and the fishers ; and as soon as I had thus made up my mind to the worst, clearness came upon me : I observed the night was falling dry ; my clothes were dried a good deal ; truly, I was in a better case than ever before, since I had landed on the isle ; and so I got to sleep at last, with a thought of gratitude.

The next day (which was the fourth of this horrible life of mine) I found my bodily strength run very low. But the sun shone, the air was sweet, and what I managed to eat of the shell-fish agreed well with me and revived my courage.

I was scarce back on my rock (where I went always the first thing after I had eaten) before I observed a boat coming down the Sound, and with her head, as I thought, in my direction.

I began at once to hope and fear exceedingly ; for I thought these men might have thought better of their cruelty and be coming back to my assistance. But another disappointment, such as yesterday's, was more than I could bear. I turned my back, accordingly, upon the sea, and did not look again till I had counted many hundreds. The boat was still heading for the island. The next time I counted the full thousand, as slowly as I could, my heart beating so as to hurt me. And then it was out of all question ! She was coming straight to Earraid !

I could no longer hold myself back, but ran to the sea-side, and out, from one rock to another, as far as I could go. It is a marvel I was not drowned ; for when I was brought to a stand at last, my legs shook under me, and my mouth was so dry I must wet it with the sea-water before I was able to shout.

All this time the boat was coming on ; and now I was able to perceive it was the same boat and the same two men as yesterday. This I knew by their hair, which the one had of a bright yellow and the other black. But now there was a third man along with them, who looked to be of a better class.

As soon as they were come within easy speech, they let down their sail and lay quiet. In spite of my supplications, they drew no nearer in, and, what frightened me most of all, the new man tee-hee'd with laughter as he talked and looked at me.

Then he stood up in the boat and addressed me a long while, speaking fast and with many wavings of his hand. I told him I had no Gaelic ; and at this he became very angry, and I began to suspect he thought he was talking English. Listening very close, I caught the word "whateffer" several times ; but all the rest was Gaelic, and might have been Greek and Hebrew for me.

"Whatever," said I, to show him I had caught a word.

"Yes, yes—yes, yes," says he, and then he looked at the other men, as much as to say, "I told you I spoke English," and began again as hard as ever in the Gaelic.

This time I picked out another word, "tide." Then I had a flash of hope. I remembered he was always waving his hand towards the mainland of the Ross.

"Do you mean when the tide is out——?" I cried, and could not finish.

"Yes, yes," said he. "Tide."

At that I turned tail upon their boat (where my adviser had once more begun to tee-hee with laughter), leaped back the way I had come, from one stone to

another, and set off running across the isle as I had never run before. In about half an hour I came out upon the shores of the creek ; and, sure enough, it was shrunk into a little trickle of water, through which I dashed, not above my knees, and landed with a shout on the main island.

A sea-bred boy would not have stayed a day on Earraid ; which is only what they call a tidal islet, and except in the bottom of the neaps, can be entered and left twice in every twenty-four hours, either dry-shod, or at the most by wading. Even I, who had the tide going out and in before me in the bay, and even watched for the ebbs, the better to get my shell-fish—even I (I say) if I had sat down to think, instead of raging at my fate, must have soon guessed the secret, and got free. It was no wonder the fishers had not understood me. The wonder was rather that they had ever guessed my pitiful illusion, and taken the trouble to come back. I had starved with cold and hunger on that island for close upon one hundred hours. But for the fishers, I might have left my bones there, in pure folly. And even as it was, I had paid for it pretty dear, not only in past sufferings, but in my present case ; being clothed like a beggar-man, scarce able to walk, and in great pain of my sore throat.

I have seen wicked men and fools, a great many of both ; and I believe they both get paid in the end ; but the fools first.

VII

MARKHEIM

“YES,” said the dealer, “our windfalls are of various kinds. Some customers are ignorant, and then I touch a dividend on my superior knowledge. Some are dishonest,” and here he held up the candle, so that the light fell strongly on his visitor, “and in that case,” he continued, “I profit by my virtue.”

Markheim had but just entered from the daylight streets, and his eyes had not yet grown familiar with the mingled shine and darkness in the shop. At these pointed words, and before the near presence of the flame, he blinked painfully and looked aside.

The dealer chuckled. “You come to me on Christmas Day,” he resumed, “when you know that I am alone in my house, put up my shutters, and make a point of refusing business. Well, you will have to pay for that ; you will have to pay for my loss of time, when I should be balancing my books ; you will have to pay, besides, for a kind of manner that I remark in you to-day very strongly. I am the essence of discretion, and ask no awkward questions ; but when a customer cannot look me in the eye, he has to pay for it.” The dealer once more chuckled ; and then, changing to his usual business voice, though still with a note of irony, “You can give, as usual, a clear account of how you came into the possession of the object ? ” he continued. “Still your uncle’s cabinet ? A remarkable collector, sir ! ”

And the little pale, round-shouldered dealer stood almost on tip-toe, looking over the top of his gold spectacles, and nodding his head with every mark of

disbelief. Markheim returned his gaze with one of infinite pity, and a touch of horror.

“This time,” said he, “you are in error. I have not come to sell, but to buy. I have no curios to dispose of; my uncle’s cabinet is bare to the wainscot; even were it still intact, I have done well on the Stock Exchange, and should more likely add to it than otherwise, and my errand to-day is simplicity itself. I seek a Christmas present for a lady,” he continued, waxing more fluent as he struck into the speech he had prepared; “and certainly I owe you every excuse for thus disturbing you upon so small a matter. But the thing was neglected yesterday; I must produce my little compliment at dinner; and, as you very well know, a rich marriage is not a thing to be neglected.”

There followed a pause, during which the dealer seemed to weigh this statement incredulously. The ticking of many clocks among the curious lumber of the shop, and the faint rushing of the cabs in a near thoroughfare, filled up the interval of silence.

“Well, sir,” said the dealer, “be it so. You are an old customer after all; and if, as you say, you have the chance of a good marriage, far be it from me to be an obstacle.—Here is a nice thing for a lady now,” he went on, “this hand-glass—fifteenth-century, warranted; comes from a good collection, too; but I reserve the name, in the interests of my customer, who was just like yourself, my dear sir, the nephew and sole heir of a remarkable collector.”

The dealer, while he thus ran on in his dry and biting voice, had stooped to take the object from its place; and, as he had done so, a shock had passed through Markheim, a start both of hand and foot, a sudden leap of many tumultuous passions to the face. It passed as swiftly as it came, and left no trace

beyond a certain trembling of the hand that now received the glass.

“A glass,” he said hoarsely, and then paused, and repeated it more clearly. “A glass? For Christmas? Surely not?”

“And why not?” cried the dealer. “Why not a glass?”

Markheim was looking upon him with an indefinable expression. “You ask me why not?” he said. “Why, look here—look in it—look at yourself! Do you like to see it? No! nor I—nor any man.”

The little man had jumped back when Markheim had so suddenly confronted him with the mirror; but now, perceiving there was nothing worse on hand, he chuckled. “Your future lady, sir, must be pretty hard favoured,” said he.

“I ask you,” said Markheim, “for a Christmas present, and you give me this—this damned reminder of years, and sins and follies—this hand-conscience. Did you mean it? Had you a thought in your mind? Tell me. It will be better for you if you do. Come, tell me about yourself. I hazard a guess now, that you are in secret a very charitable man?”

The dealer looked closely at his companion. It was very odd, Markheim did not appear to be laughing; there was something in his face like an eager sparkle of hope, but nothing of mirth.

“What are you driving at?” the dealer asked.

“Not charitable?” returned the other gloomily. “Not charitable? not pious; not scrupulous; unloving, unbeloved; a hand to get money, a safe to keep it. Is that all? Dear God, man, is that all?”

“I will tell you what it is,” began the dealer, with some sharpness, and then broke off again into

a chuckle. "But I see this is a love-match of yours, and you have been drinking the lady's health."

"Ah!" cried Markheim, with a strange curiosity. "Ah, have you been in love? Tell me about that."

"I," cried the dealer. "I in love! I never had the time, nor have I the time to-day for all this nonsense.—Will you take the glass?"

"Where is the hurry?" returned Markheim. "It is very pleasant to stand here talking; and life is so short and insecure that I would not hurry away from any pleasure—no, not even from so mild a one as this. We should rather cling, cling to what little we can get, like a man at a cliff's edge. Every second is a cliff, if you think upon it—a cliff a mile high—high enough, if we fall, to dash us out of every feature of humanity. Hence it is best to talk pleasantly. Let us talk of each other: why should we wear this mask? Let us be confidential. Who knows?—we might become friends."

"I have just one word to say to you," said the dealer. "Either make your purchase, or walk out of my shop!"

"True, true," said Markheim. "Enough fooling. To business. Show me something else."

The dealer stooped once more, this time to replace the glass upon the shelf, his thin blond hair falling over his eyes as he did so. Markheim moved a little nearer, with one hand in the pocket of his greatcoat: he drew himself up and filled his lungs; at the same time many different emotions were depicted together on his face—terror, horror, and resolve, fascination and a physical repulsion; and through a haggard lift of his upper lip his teeth looked out.

"This, perhaps, may suit," observed the dealer: and then, as he began to re-arise, Markheim bounded

from behind upon his victim. The long, skewer-like dagger flashed and fell. The dealer struggled like a hen, striking his temple on the shelf, and then tumbled on the floor in a heap.

Time had some score of small voices in that shop, some stately and slow, as was becoming to their great age; others garrulous and hurried. All these told out the seconds in an intricate chorus of tickings. Then the passage of a lad's feet, heavily running on the pavement, broke in upon these smaller voices and startled Markheim into the consciousness of his surroundings. He looked about him awfully. The candle stood on the counter, its flame solemnly wagging in a draught; and by that inconsiderable movement the whole room was filled with noiseless bustle and kept heaving like a sea: the tall shadows nodding, the gross blots of darkness swelling and dwindling as with respiration, the faces of the portraits and the china gods changing and wavering like images in water. The inner door stood ajar, and peered into that leaguer of shadows with a long slit of daylight like a pointing finger.

From these fear-stricken roving Markheim's eyes returned to the body of his victim, where it lay both humped and sprawling, incredibly small and strangely meaner than in life. In these poor, miserly clothes, in that ungainly attitude, the dealer lay like so much sawdust. Markheim had feared to see it, and, lo! it was nothing. And yet, as he gazed, this bundle of old clothes and pool of blood began to find eloquent voices. There it must lie; there was none to work the cunning hinges or direct the miracle of locomotion—there it must lie till it was found. Found! ay, and then? Then would this dead flesh lift up a cry that would ring over England, and fill the world with the

echoes of pursuit. Ay, dead or not, this was still the enemy. "Time was that when the brains were out," he thought; and the first word struck into his mind. Time, now that the deed was accomplished—time, which had closed for the victim, had become instant and momentous for the slayer.

The thought was yet in his mind when, first one and then another, with every variety of pace and voice—one deep as the bell from a cathedral turret, another ringing on its treble notes the prelude of a waltz—the clocks began to strike the hour of three in the afternoon.

The sudden outbreak of so many tongues in that dumb chamber staggered him. He began to bestir himself, going to and fro with the candle, beleaguered by moving shadows, and startled to the soul by chance reflections. In many rich mirrors, some of home design, some from Venice or Amsterdam, he saw his face repeated and repeated, as it were an army of spies; his own eyes met and detected him; and the sound of his own steps, lightly as they fell, vexed the surrounding quiet. And still, as he continued to fill his pockets, his mind accused him, with a sickening iteration, of the thousand faults of his design. He should have chosen a more quiet hour; he should have prepared an alibi; he should not have used a knife; he should have been more cautious, and only bound and gagged the dealer, and not killed him; he should have been more bold, and killed the servant also; he should have done all things otherwise: poignant regrets, weary, incessant toiling of the mind to change what was unchangeable, to plan what was now useless, to be the architect of the irrevocable past. Meanwhile, and behind all this activity, brute terrors, like the scurrying of rats in a deserted attic,

filled the more remote chambers of his brain with riot ; the hand of the constable would fall heavy on his shoulder, and his nerves would jerk like a hooked fish ; or he beheld, in galloping defile, the dock, the prison, the gallows, and the black coffin.

Terror of the people in the street sat down before his mind like a besieging army. It was impossible, he thought, but that some rumour of the struggle must have reached their ears and set on edge their curiosity ; and now, in all the neighbouring houses, he divined them sitting motionless and with uplifted ear—solitary people, condemned to spend Christmas dwelling alone on memories of the past, and now startingly recalled from that tender exercise ; happy family parties, struck into silence round the table, the mother still with raised finger : every degree and age and humour, but all, by their own hearths, prying and hearkening and weaving the rope that was to hang him. Sometimes it seemed to him he could not move too softly ; the clink of the tall Bohemian goblets rang out loudly like a bell ; and alarmed by the bigness of the ticking, he was tempted to stop the clocks. And then, again, with a swift transition of his terrors, the very silence of the place appeared a source of peril, and a thing to strike and freeze the passer-by ; and he would step more boldly, and bustle aloud among the contents of the shop, and imitate, with elaborate bravado, the movements of a busy man at ease in his own house.

But he was now so pulled about by different alarms, that, while one portion of his mind was still alert and cunning, another trembled on the brink of lunacy. One hallucination in particular took a strong hold on his credulity. The neighbour hearkening with white face beside his window, the passer-by arrested by a horrible surmise on the pavement—these could at

worst suspect, they could not know ; through the brick walls and shuttered windows only sounds could penetrate. But here, within the house, was he alone ? He knew he was ; he had watched the servant set forth sweethearting, in her poor best, “ out for the day ” written on every ribbon and smile. Yes, he was alone, of course ; and yet, in the bulk of empty house above him, he could surely hear a stir of delicate footing—he was surely conscious, inexplicably conscious, of some presence. Ay, surely ; to every room and corner of the house his imagination followed it ; and now it was a faceless thing, and yet had eyes to see with ; and again it was a shadow of himself ; and yet again beheld the image of the dead dealer, re-inspired with cunning and hatred.

At times, with a strong effort, he would glance at the open door which still seemed to repel his eyes. The house was tall, the skylight small and dirty, the day blind with fog ; and the light that filtered down to the ground story was exceedingly faint, and showed dimly on the threshold of the shop. And yet, in that strip of doubtful brightness, did there not hang wavering a shadow ?

Suddenly, from the street outside, a very jovial gentleman began to beat with a staff on the shop-door, accompanying his blows with shouts and railleries in which the dealer was continually called upon by name. Markheim, smitten into ice, glanced at the dead man. But no ! he lay quite still ; he was fled away far beyond ear-shot of these blows and shoutings ; he was sunk beneath seas of silence ; and his name, which would once have caught his notice above the howling of a storm, had become an empty sound. And presently the jovial gentleman desisted from his knocking and departed.

Here was a broad hint to hurry what remained to be done, to get forth from this accusing neighbourhood, to plunge into a bath of London multitudes, and to reach, on the other side of day, that haven of safety and apparent innocence—his bed. One visitor had come : at any moment another might follow and be more obstinate. To have done the deed, and yet not to reap the profit, would be too abhorrent a failure. The money, that was now Markheim's concern ; and as a means to that, the keys.

He glanced over his shoulder at the open door ; where the shadow was still lingering and shivering ; and with no conscious repugnance of the mind, yet with a tremor of the belly, he drew near the body of his victim. The human character had quite departed. Like a suit half-stuffed with bran, the limbs lay scattered, the trunk doubled, on the floor ; and yet the thing repelled him. Although so dingy and inconsiderable to the eye, he feared it might have more significance to the touch. He took the body by the shoulders and turned it on its back. It was strangely light and supple, and the limbs, as if they had been broken, fell into the oddest postures. The face was robbed of all expression ; but it was as pale as wax, and shockingly smeared with blood about one temple. That was, for Markheim, the one displeasing circumstance. It carried him back, upon the instant, to a certain fair-day in a fishers' village : a grey day, a piping wind, a crowd upon the street, a blare of brasses, the booming of drums, the nasal voice of a ballad-singer ; and a boy going to and fro, buried over-head in the crowd and divided between interest and fear, until, coming out upon the chief place of concourse, he beheld a booth and a great screen with pictures, dismally designed, garishly coloured :

Brownrigg with her apprentice ; the Mannings with their murdered guest ; Weare in the death-grip of Thurtell ; and a score besides of famous crimes. The thing was as clear as an illusion ; he was once again that little boy ; he was looking once again, and with the same sense of physical revolt, at these vile pictures ; he was still stunned by the thumping of the drums. A bar of that day's music returned upon his memory ; and at that, for the first time, a qualm came over him, a breath of nausea, a sudden weakness of the joints, which he must instantly resist and conquer.

He judged it more prudent to confront than to flee from these considerations ; looking the more hardily in the dead face, bending his mind to realise the nature and greatness of his crime. So little a while ago that face had moved with every change of sentiment, that pale mouth had spoken, that body had been all on fire with governable energies ; and now, and by his act, that piece of life had been arrested, as the horologist, with interjected finger, arrests the beating of the clock. So he reasoned in vain ; he could rise to no more remorseful consciousness ; the same heart which had shuddered before the painted effigies of crime looked on its reality unmoved. At best, he felt a gleam of pity for one who had been endowed in vain with all those faculties that can make the world a garden of enchantment, one who had never lived and who was now dead. But of penitence, no, not a tremor.

With that, shaking himself clear of these considerations, he found the keys and advanced towards the open door of the shop. Outside, it had begun to rain smartly ; and the sound of the shower upon the roof had banished silence. Like some dripping cavern, the chambers of the house were haunted by

an incessant echoing, which filled the ear and mingled with the ticking of the clocks. And, as Markheim approached the door, he seemed to hear, in answer to his own cautious tread, the steps of another foot withdrawing up the stair. The shadow still palpitated loosely on the threshold. He threw a ton's weight of resolve upon his muscles, and drew back the door.

The faint, foggy daylight glimmered dimly on the bare floor and stairs; on the bright suit of armour posted, halbert in hand, upon the landing: and on the dark wood-carvings, and framed pictures that hung against the yellow panels of the wainscot. So loud was the beating of the rain through all the house that, in Markheim's ears, it began to be distinguished into many different sounds. Footsteps and sighs, the tread of regiments marching in the distance, the chink of money in the counting, and the creaking of doors held stealthily ajar, appeared to mingle with the patter of the drops upon the cupola and the gushing of the water in the pipes. The sense that he was not alone grew upon him to the verge of madness. On every side he was haunted and begirt by presences. He heard them moving in the upper chambers; from the shop he heard the dead man getting to his legs; and as he began with a great effort to mount the stairs, feet fled quietly before him and followed stealthily behind. If he were but deaf, he thought, how tranquilly he would possess his soul! And then again, and hearkening with ever fresh attention, he blessed himself for that unresting sense which held the outposts and stood a trusty sentinel upon his life. His head turned continually on his neck; his eyes, which seemed starting from their orbits, scouted on every side, and on every side were half-rewarded as with the

tail of something nameless vanishing. The four-and-twenty steps to the first floor were four-and-twenty agonies.

On that first story, the doors stood ajar, three of them like three ambushes, shaking his nerves like the throats of cannon. He could never again, he felt, be sufficiently immured and fortified from men's observing eyes ; he longed to be home, girt in by walls, buried among bedclothes, and invisible to all but God. And at that thought he wondered a little, recollecting tales of other murderers and the fear they were said to entertain of heavenly avengers. It was not so, at least, with him. He feared the laws of nature, lest, in their callous and immutable procedure, they should preserve some damning evidence of his crime. He feared tenfold more, with a slavish, superstitious terror, some scission in the continuity of man's experience, some wilful illegality of nature. He played a game of skill, depending on the rules, calculating consequence from cause ; and what if nature, as the defeated tyrant overthrew the chess-board, should break the mould of their succession ? The like had befallen Napoleon (so writers said) when the winter changed the time of its appearance. The like might befall Markheim : the solid walls might become transparent and reveal his doings like those of bees in a glass hive ; the stout planks might yield under his foot like quicksands and detain him in their clutch ; ay, and there were soberer accidents that might destroy him : if, for instance, the house should fall and imprison him beside the body of his victim ; or the house next door should fly on fire, and the firemen invade him from all sides. These things he feared ; and, in a sense, these things might be called the hands of God reached forth against sin. But about God Himself he was at ease : his

act was doubtless exceptional, but so were his excuses, which God knew ; it was there, and not among men, that he felt sure of justice.

When he had got safe into the drawing-room, and shut the door behind him, he was aware of a respite from alarms. The room was quite dismantled, uncarpeted besides, and strewn with packing-cases and incongruous furniture ; several great pier-glasses, in which he beheld himself at various angles, like an actor on a stage ; many pictures, framed and unframed, standing with their faces to the wall ; a fine Sheraton sideboard, a cabinet of marquetry, and a great old bed, with tapestry hangings. The windows opened to the floor ; but by great good fortune the lower part of the shutters had been closed, and this concealed him from the neighbours. Here, then, Markheim drew in a packing-case before the cabinet, and began to search among the keys. It was a long business, for there were many ; and it was irksome besides ; for, after all, there might be nothing in the cabinet, and time was on the wing. But the closeness of the occupation sobered him. With the tail of his eye he saw the door—even glanced at it from time to time directly, like a besieged commander, pleased to verify the good estate of his defences. But in truth he was at peace. The rain falling in the street sounded natural and pleasant. Presently, on the other side, the notes of a piano were wakened to the music of a hymn, and the voices of many children took up the air and words. How stately, how comfortable was the melody ! How fresh the youthful voices ! Markheim gave ear to it smilingly, as he sorted out the keys ; and his mind was thronged with answerable ideas and images ; church-going children and the pealing of the high organ ; children afield, bathers

by the brookside, ramblers on the brambly common, kite-flyers in the windy and cloud-navigated sky ; and then, at another cadence of the hymn, back again to church, and the somnolence of summer Sundays, and the high genteel voice of the parson (which he smiled a little to recall) and the painted Jacobean tombs, and the dim lettering of the Ten Commandments in the chancel.

And as he sat thus, at once busy and absent, he was startled to his feet. A flash of ice, a flash of fire, a bursting gush of blood, went over him, and then he stood transfixed and thrilling. A step mounted the stair slowly and steadily, and presently a hand was laid upon the knob, and the lock clicked, and the door opened.

Fear held Markheim in a vice. What to expect he knew not, whether the dead man walking, or the official ministers of human justice, or some chance witness blindly stumbling in to consign him to the gallows. But when a face was thrust into the aperture, glanced round the room, looked at him, nodded and smiled as if in friendly recognition, and then withdrew again, and the door closed behind it, his fear broke loose from his control in a hoarse cry. At the sound of this the visitant returned.

" Did you call me ? " he asked pleasantly, and with that he entered the room and closed the door behind him.

Markheim stood and gazed at him with all his eyes. Perhaps there was a film upon his sight, but the outlines of the new-comer seemed to change and waver like those of the idols in the wavering candlelight of the shop ; and at times he thought he knew him ; and at times he thought he bore a likeness to himself ; and always, like a lump of living terror, there lay in

his bosom the conviction that this thing was not of the earth and not of God.

And yet the creature had a strange air of the commonplace, as he stood looking on Markheim with a smile; and when he added: "You are looking for the money, I believe?" it was in the tones of everyday politeness.

Markheim made no answer.

"I should warn you," resumed the other, "that the maid has left her sweetheart earlier than usual and will soon be here. If Mr. Markheim be found in this house, I need not describe to him the consequences."

"You know me?" cried the murderer.

The visitor smiled. "You have long been a favourite of mine," he said; "and I have long observed and often sought to help you."

"What are you?" cried Markheim, "the devil?"

"What I may be," returned the other, "cannot affect the service I propose to render you."

"It can," cried Markheim; "it does! Be helped by you? No, never; not by you! You do not know me yet; thank God, you do not know me!"

"I know you," replied the visitant, with a sort of kind severity, or rather firmness. "I know you to the soul."

"Know me!" cried Markheim. "Who can do so? My life is but a travesty and slander on myself. I have lived to belie my nature. All men do; all men are better than this disguise, that grows about and stifles them. You see each dragged away by life, like one whom bravos have seized and muffled in a cloak. If they had their own control—if you could see their faces, they would be altogether different, they would shine out for heroes and saints! I am worse than most; myself is more overlaid; my excuse is known

to me and God. But, had I the time, I could disclose myself."

"To me?" inquired the visitant.

"To you before all," returned the murderer. "I supposed you were intelligent. I thought—since you exist—you would prove a reader of the heart. And yet you would propose to judge me by my acts! Think of it; my acts! I was born and I have lived in a land of giants; giants have dragged me by the wrists since I was born out of my mother—the giant of circumstance. And you would judge me by my acts! But you cannot look within? Can you not understand that evil is hateful to me? Can you not see within me the clear writing of conscience, never blurred by any wilful sophistry, although too often disregarded? Can you not read me for a thing that surely must be common as humanity—the unwilling sinner?"

"All this is very feelingly expressed," was the reply, "but it regards me not. These points of consistency are beyond my province, and I care not in the least by what compulsion you may have been dragged away, so as you are but carried in the right direction. But time flies; the servant delays, looking in the faces of the crowd and at the pictures on the hoardings, but still she keeps moving nearer; and remember, it is as if the gallows itself was striding towards you through the Christmas streets! Shall I help you; I, who know all? Shall I tell you where to find the money?"

"For what price?" asked Markheim.

"I offer you the service for a Christmas gift," returned the other.

Markheim could not refrain from smiling with a kind of bitter triumph. "No," said he, "I will take

nothing at your hands ; if I were dying of thirst, and it was your hand that put the pitcher to my lips, I should find the courage to refuse. It may be credulous, but I will do nothing to commit myself to evil.”

“ I have no objection to a death-bed repentance,” observed the visitant.

“ Because you disbelieve their efficacy ! ” Markheim cried.

“ I do not say so,” returned the other ; “ but I look on these things from a different side, and when the life is done my interest falls. The man has lived to serve me, to spread black looks under colour of religion, or to sow tares in the wheat-field, as you do, in a course of weak compliance with desire. Now that he draws so near to his deliverance, he can add but one act of service—to repent, to die smiling, and thus to build up in confidence and hope the more timorous of my surviving followers. I am not so hard a master. Try me. Accept my help. Please yourself in life as you have done hitherto ; please yourself more amply, spread your elbows at the board ; and when the night begins to fall and the curtains to be drawn, I tell you, for your greater comfort, that you will find it even easy to compound your quarrel with your conscience, and to make a truckling peace with God. I came but now from such a death-bed, and the room was full of sincere mourners, listening to the man’s last words : and when I looked into that face, which had been set as a flint against mercy, I found it smiling with hope.”

“ And do you, then, suppose me such a creature ? ” asked Markheim. “ Do you think I have no more generous aspirations than to sin, and sin, and sin, and, at the last, sneak into heaven ? My heart rises at the thought. Is this, then, your experience of mankind ?

or is it because you find me with red hands that you presume such baseness? and is this crime of murder indeed so impious as to dry up the very springs of good?"

"Murder is to me no special category," replied the other. "All sins are murder, even as all life is war. I behold your race, like starving mariners on a raft, plucking crusts out of the hands of famine and feeding on each other's lives. I follow sins beyond the moment of their acting; I find in all that the last consequence is death; and to my eyes, the pretty maid who thwarts her mother with such taking graces on a question of a ball, drips no less visibly with human gore than such a murderer as yourself. Do I say that I follow sins? I follow virtues also; they differ not by the thickness of a nail, they are both scythes for the reaping angel of Death. Evil, for which I live, consists not in action but in character. The bad man is deaf to me; not the bad act, whose fruits, if we could follow them far enough down the hurtling cataract of the ages, might yet be found more blessed than those of the rarest virtues. And it is not because you have killed a dealer, but because you are Markheim, that I offer to forward your escape."

"I will lay my heart open to you," answered Markheim. "This crime on which you find me is my last. On my way to it I have learned many lessons; itself is a lesson, a momentous lesson. Hitherto I have been driven with revolt to what I would not; I was a bonds slave to poverty, driven and scourged. There are robust virtues that can stand in these temptations; mine was not so: I had a thirst of pleasure. But to-day, and out of this deed, I pluck both warning and riches—both the power and a fresh resolve to be myself. I become in all things a free

actor in the world ; I begin to see myself all changed, these hands the agents of good, this heart at peace. Something comes over me out of the past ; something of what I have dreamed on Sabbath evenings to the sound of the church organ, of what I forecast when I shed tears over noble books, or talked, an innocent child, with my mother. There lies my lie ; I have wandered a few years, but now I see once more my city of destination."

"You are to use this money on the Stock Exchange, I think ?" remarked the visitor ; "and there, if I mistake not, you have already lost some thousands."

"Ah," said Markheim, "but this time I have a sure thing."

"This time, again, you will lose," replied the visitor quietly.

"Ah, but I will keep back the half !" cried Markheim.

"That also you will lose," said the other.

The sweat started upon Markheim's brow. "Well, then, what matter ?" he exclaimed. "Say it be lost, say I am plunged again in poverty, shall one part of me, and that the worse, continue until the end to override the better ? Evil and good run strong in me, haling me both ways. I do not love the one thing, I love all. I can conceive great deeds, renunciations, martyrdoms ; and though I be fallen to such a crime as murder, pity is no stranger to my thoughts. I pity the poor ; who knows their trials better than myself ? I pity and help them ; I prize love, I love honest laughter ; there is no good thing nor true thing on earth but I love it from my heart. And are my vices only to direct my life, and my virtues to lie without effect, like some passive lumber of the mind ? Not so ; good, also, is the spring of acts."

But the visitant raised his finger. "For six-and-thirty years that you have been in this world," said he, "through many changes of fortune and varieties of humour, I have watched you steadily fall. Fifteen years ago you would have started at a theft. Three years back you would have blenched at the name of murder. Is there any crime, is there any cruelty or meanness, from which you still recoil?—five years from now I shall detect you in the fact! Downward, downward lies your way; nor can anything but death avail to stop you."

"It is true," Markheim said huskily, "I have in some degree complied with evil. But it is so with all: the very saints, in the mere exercise of living, grow less dainty, and take on the tone of their surroundings."

"I will propound to you one simple question," said the other; "and as you answer, I shall read to you your moral horoscope. You have grown in many things more lax; possibly you do right to be so; and at any account, it is the same with all men. But granting that, are you in any one particular, however trifling, more difficult to please with your own conduct, or do you go in all things with a looser rein?"

"In any one?" repeated Markheim, with an anguish of consideration. "No," he added, with despair, "in none! I have gone down in all."

"Then," said the visitor, "content yourself with what you are, for you will never change; and the words of your part on this stage are irrevocably written down."

Markheim stood for a long while silent, and indeed it was the visitor who first broke the silence. "That being so," he said, "shall I show you the money?"

"And grace?" cried Markheim.

“Have you not tried it?” returned the other. “Two or three years ago, did I not see you on the platform of revival meetings, and was not your voice the loudest in the hymn?”

“It is true,” said Markheim; “and I see clearly what remains for me by way of duty. I thank you for these lessons from my soul; my eyes are opened, and I behold myself at last for what I am.”

At this moment, the sharp note of the door-bell rang through the house; and the visitant, as though this were some concerted signal for which he had been waiting, changed at once in his demeanour.

“The maid!” he cried. “She has returned, as I forewarned you, and there is now before you one more difficult passage. Her master, you must say, is ill; you must let her in, with an assured but rather serious countenance—no smiles, no overacting, and I promise you success! Once the girl within, and the door closed, the same dexterity that has already rid you of the dealer will relieve you of this last danger in your path. Thenceforward you have the whole evening—the whole night, if needful—to ransack the treasures of the house and to make good your safety. This is help that comes to you with the mask of danger. Up!” he cried; “up, friend; your life hangs trembling in the scales: up, and act!”

Markheim steadily regarded his counsellor. “If I be condemned to evil acts,” he said, “there is still one door of freedom open—I can cease from action. If my life be an ill thing, I can lay it down. Though I be, as you say truly, at the beck of every small temptation, I can yet, by one decisive gesture, place myself beyond the reach of all. My love of good is damned to barrenness; it may, and let it be! But I have still my hatred of evil; and from that, to your

galling disappointment, you shall see that I can draw both energy and courage."

The features of the visitor began to undergo a wonderful and lovely change: they brightened and softened with a tender triumph, and, even as they brightened, faded and dislimned. But Markheim did not pause to watch or understand the transformation. He opened the door and went downstairs very slowly, thinking to himself. His past went soberly before him; he beheld it as it was, ugly and strenuous like a dream, random as chance-medley—a scene of defeat. Life, as he thus reviewed it, tempted him no longer; but on the farther side he perceived a quiet haven for his bark. He paused in the passage, and looked into the shop, where the candle still burned by the dead body. It was strangely silent. Thoughts of the dealer swarmed into his mind, as he stood gazing. And then the bell once more broke out into impatient clamour.

He confronted the maid upon the threshold with something like a smile.

"You had better go for the police," said he: "I have killed your master."

VIII

A COLLEGE MAGAZINE

ALL through my boyhood and youth I was known and pointed out for the pattern of an idler; and yet I was always busy on my own private end, which was to learn to write. I kept always two books in my pocket,

one to read, one to write in. As I walked, my mind was busy fitting what I saw with appropriate words; when I sat by the roadside, I would either read, or a pencil and a penny version-book would be in my hand, to note down the features of the scene or commemorate some halting stanzas. Thus I lived with words. And what I thus wrote was for no ulterior use, it was written consciously for practice. It was not so much that I wished to be an author (though I wished that too) as that I had vowed that I would learn to write. That was a proficiency that tempted me; and I practised to acquire it, as men learn to whittle, in a wager with myself. Description was the principal field of my exercise; for to any one with senses there is always something worth describing, and town and country are but one continuous subject. But I worked in other ways also; often accompanied my walks with dramatic dialogues, in which I played many parts; and often exercised myself in writing down conversations from memory.

This was all excellent, no doubt; so were the diaries I sometimes tried to keep, but always and very speedily discarded, finding them a school of posturing and melancholy self-deception. And yet this was not the most efficient part of my training. Good though it was, it only taught me (so far as I have learned them at all) the lower and less intellectual elements of the art, the choice of the essential note and the right word: things that to a happier constitution had perhaps come by nature. And regarded as training, it had one grave defect; for it set me no standard of achievement. So that there was perhaps more profit, as there was certainly more effort, in my secret labours at home. Whenever I read a book or a passage that particularly pleased me, in which a

thing was said or an effect rendered with propriety, in which there was either some conspicuous force or some happy distinction in the style, I must sit down at once and set myself to ape that quality. I was unsuccessful, and I knew it; and tried again, and was again unsuccessful, and always unsuccessful; but at least in these vain bouts I got some practice in rhythm, in harmony, in construction and the co-ordination of parts. I have thus played the sedulous ape to Hazlitt, to Lamb, to Wordsworth, to Sir Thomas Browne, to Defoe, to Hawthorne, to Montaigne, to Baudelaire, and to Obermann. I remember one of these monkey tricks, which was called "The Vanity of Morals": it was to have had a second part, "The Vanity of Knowledge"; and as I had neither morality nor scholarship, the names were apt; but the second part was never attempted, and the first part was written (which is my reason for recalling it, ghostlike, from its ashes) no less than three times: first in the manner of Hazlitt, second in the manner of Ruskin, who had cast on me a passing spell, and third, in a laborious pasticcio of Sir Thomas Browne. So with my other works: "Cain," an epic, was (save the mark!) an imitation of "Sordello": "Robin Hood," a tale in verse, took an eclectic middle course among the fields of Keats, Chaucer, and Morris: in *Monmouth*, a tragedy, I reclined on the bosom of Mr. Swinburne; in my innumerable gouty-footed lyrics, I followed many masters; in the first draft of *The King's Pardon*, a tragedy, I was on the trail of no less a man than John Webster; in the second draft of the same piece, with staggering versatility, I had shifted my allegiance to Congreve, and of course conceived my fable in a less serious vein—for it was not Congreve's verse, it was his exquisite prose, that I admired and

sought to copy. Even at the age of thirteen I had tried to do justice to the inhabitants of the famous city of Peebles in the style of "The Book of Snobs." So I might go on for ever, through all my abortive novels, and down to my later plays, of which I think more tenderly, for they were not only conceived at first under the bracing influence of old Dumas, but have met with resurrections : one, strangely bettered by another hand, came on the stage itself and was played by bodily actors ; the other, originally known as *Semiramis : a Tragedy*, I have observed on book-stalls under the *alias* of "Prince Otto." But enough has been said to show by what arts of impersonation and in what purely ventriloquial efforts I first saw my words on paper.

That, like it or not, is the way to learn to write ; whether I have profited or not, that is the way. It was so Keats learned, and there was never a finer temperament for literature than Keats's ; it was so, if we could trace it out, that all men have learned ; and that is why a revival of letters is always accompanied or heralded by a cast back to earlier and fresher models. Perhaps I hear some one cry out : " But this is not the way to be original ! " It is not ; nor is there any way but to be born so. Nor yet, if you are born original, is there anything in this training that shall clip the wings of your originality. There can be none more original than Montaigne, neither could any be more unlike Cicero ; yet no craftsman can fail to see how much the one must have tried in his time to imitate the other. Burns is the very type of a prime force in letters : he was of all men the most imitative. Shakespeare himself, the imperial, proceeds directly from a school. It is only from a school that we can expect to have good writers ;

it is almost invariably from a school that great writers, these lawless exceptions, issue. Nor is there anything here that should astonish the considerate. Before he can tell what cadences he truly prefers, the student should have tried all that are possible; before he can choose and preserve a fitting key of language, he should long have practised the literary scales; and it is only after years of such gymnastic that he can sit down at last, legions of words swarming to his call, dozens of turns of phrase simultaneously bidding for his choice, and he himself knowing what he wants to do and (within the narrow limit of a man's ability) able to do it.

And it is the great point of these imitations that there still shines beyond the student's reach his inimitable model. Let him try as he please, he is still sure of failure; and it is a very old and a very true saying that failure is the only highroad to success. I must have had some disposition to learn; for I clear-sightedly condemned my own performances. I liked doing them indeed; but when they were done, I could see they were rubbish. In consequence, I very rarely showed them even to my friends; and such friends as I chose to be my confidants I must have chosen well, for they had the friendliness to be quite plain with me. "Padding," said one. Another wrote: "I cannot understand why you do lyrics so badly." No more could I! Thrice I put myself in the way of a more authoritative rebuff, by sending a paper to a magazine. These were returned; and I was not surprised or even pained. If they had not been looked at, as (like all amateurs) I suspected was the case, there was no good in repeating the experiment; if they had been looked at—well, then I had not yet learned to write, and I must keep on learning and living. Lastly,

I had a piece of good fortune which is the occasion of this paper, and by which I was able to see my literature in print, and to measure experimentally how far I stood from the favour of the public.

IX

TALK AND TALKERS

Sir, we had a good talk.—JOHNSON.

As we must account for every idle word, so we must for every idle silence.—FRANKLIN.

I

THERE can be no fairer ambition than to excel in talk ; to be affable, gay, ready, clear and welcome ; to have a fact, a thought, or an illustration, put to every subject ; and not only to cheer the flight of time among our intimates, but bear our part in that great international congress, always sitting, where public wrongs are first declared, public errors first corrected, and the course of public opinion shaped, day by day ; a little nearer to the right. No measure comes before Parliament but it has been long ago prepared by the grand jury of the talkers ; no book is written that has not been largely composed by their assistance. Literature in many of its branches is no other than the shadow of good talk ; but the imitation falls far short of the original in life, freedom, and effect. There are always two to a talk, giving and taking, comparing experience and according conclusions. Talk is fluid, tentative, continually “ in further search and progress ” ; while

written words remain fixed, become idols even to the writer, found wooden dogmatisms, and preserve flies of obvious error in the amber of the truth. Last and chief, while literature, gagged with linsey-woolsey, can only deal with a fraction of the life of man, talk goes fancy free and may call a spade a spade. Talk has none of the freezing immunities of the pulpit. It cannot, even if it would, become merely æsthetic or merely classical like literature. A jest intervenes, the solemn humbug is dissolved in laughter, and speech runs forth out of the contemporary groove into the open fields of nature, cheery and cheering, like school-boys out of school. And it is in talk alone that we can learn our period and ourselves. In short, the first duty of a man is to speak ; that is his chief business in this world ; and talk, which is the harmonious speech of two or more, is by far the most accessible of pleasures. It costs nothing in money ; it is all profit ; it completes our education, founds and fosters our friendships, and can be enjoyed at any age and in almost any state of health.

The spice of life is battle ; the friendliest relations are still a kind of contest ; and if we would not forego all that is valuable in our lot, we must continually face some other person, eye to eye, and wrestle a fall whether in love or enmity. It is still by force of body, or power of character or intellect, that we attain to worthy pleasures. Men and women contend for each other in the lists of love, like rival mesmerists ; the active and adroit decide their challenges in the sports of the body ; and the sedentary sit down to chess or conversation. All sluggish and pacific pleasures are, to the same degree, solitary and selfish ; and every durable bond between human beings is founded in or heightened by some element of

competition. Now, the relation that has the least root in matter is undoubtedly that airy one of friendship; and hence, I suppose, it is that good talk most commonly arises among friends. Talk is, indeed, both the scene and instrument of friendship. It is in talk alone that the friends can measure strength, and enjoy the amicable counter-assertion of personality which is the gauge of relations and the sport of life.

A good talk is not to be had for the asking. Humours must first be accorded in a kind of overture or prologue; hour, company, and circumstance be suited; and then, at a fit juncture, the subject, the quarry of two heated minds, spring up like a deer out of the wood. Not that the talker has any of the hunter's pride, though he has all and more than all his ardour. The genuine artist follows the stream of conversation as an angler follows the windings of a brook, not dallying where he fails to "kill." He trusts implicitly to hazard; and he is rewarded by continual variety, continual pleasure, and those changing prospects of the truth that are the best of education. There is nothing in a subject, so called, that we should regard it as an idol or follow it beyond the promptings of desire. Indeed, there are few subjects; and so far as they are truly talkable, more than the half of them may be reduced to three: that I am I, that you are you, and that there are other people dimly understood to be not quite the same as either. Wherever talk may range, it still runs half the time on these eternal lines. The theme being set, each plays on himself as on an instrument; asserts and justifies himself; ransacks his brain for instances and opinions, and brings them forth new-minted, to his own surprise and the admiration of his adversary.

All natural talk is a festival of ostentation ; and by the laws of the game each accepts and fans the vanity of the other. It is from that reason that we venture to lay ourselves so open, that we dare to be so warmly eloquent, and that we swell in each other's eyes to such a vast proportion. For talkers, once launched, begin to overflow the limits of their ordinary selves, tower up to the height of their secret pretensions, and give themselves out for the heroes, brave, pious, musical, and wise, that in their most shining moments they aspire to be. So they weave for themselves with words and for a while inhabit a palace of delights, temple at once and theatre, where they fill the round of the world's dignities, and feast with the gods, exulting in Kudos. And when the talk is over, each goes his way, still flushed with vanity and admiration, still trailing clouds of glory ; each declines from the height of his ideal orgie, not in a moment, but by slow declension. I remember, in the *entr'acte* of an afternoon performance, coming forth into the sunshine in a beautiful green, gardened corner of a romantic city ; and as I sat and smoked, the music moving in my blood, I seemed to sit there and evaporate *The Flying Dutchman* (for it was that I had been hearing) with a wonderful sense of life, warmth, well-being and pride ; and the noises of the city, voices, bells, and marching feet, fell together in my ears like a symphonious orchestra. In the same way, the excitement of a good talk lives for a long while after in the blood, the heart still hot within you, the brain still simmering, and the physical earth swimming around you with the colours of the sunset.

Natural talk, like ploughing, should turn up a large surface of life, rather than dig mines into geological strata. Masses of experience, anecdote, incident,

cross-lights, quotation, historical instances, the whole flotsam and jetsam of two minds forced in and in upon the matter in hand from every point of the compass, and from every degree of mental elevation and abasement—these are the material with which talk is fortified, the food on which the talkers thrive. Such argument as is proper to the exercise should still be brief and seizing. Talk should proceed by instances ; by the apposite, not the expository. It should keep close along the lines of humanity, near the bosoms and businesses of men, at the level where history, fiction, and experience intersect and illuminate each other. I am I, and you are you, with all my heart ; but conceive how these lean propositions change and brighten when, instead of words, the actual you and I sit cheek by jowl, the spirit housed in the live body, and the very clothes uttering voices to corroborate the story in the face. Not less surprising is the change when we leave off to speak of generalities—the bad, the good, the miser, and all the characters of Theophrastus—and call up other men, by anecdote or instance, in their very trick and feature ; or, trading on a common knowledge, toss each other famous names, still glowing with the hues of life. Communication is no longer by words, but by the instancing of whole biographies, epics, systems of philosophy, and epochs of history, in bulk. That which is understood excels that which is spoken in quantity and quality alike ; ideas thus figured and personified, change hands, as we may say, like coin ; and the speakers imply without effort the most obscure and intricate thoughts. Strangers who have a large common ground of reading will, for this reason, come the sooner to the grapple of genuine converse. If they know Othello and Napoleon, Consuelo and Clarissa Harlowe, Vautrin and Steenie

Steenson, they can leave generalities and begin at once to speak by figures.

Conduct and art are the two subjects that arise most frequently and that embrace the widest range of facts. A few pleasures bear discussion for their own sake, but only those which are most social or most radically human; and even these can only be discussed among their devotees. A technicality is always welcome to the expert, whether in athletics, art, or law; I have heard the best kind of talk on technicalities from such rare and happy persons as both know and love their business. No human being ever spoke of scenery for above two minutes at a time, which makes me suspect we hear too much of it in literature. The weather is regarded as the very nadir and scoff of conversational topics. And yet the weather, the dramatic element in scenery, is far more tractable in language, and far more human both in import and suggestion, than the stable features of the landscape. Sailors and shepherds, and the people generally of coast and mountain, talk well of it; and it is often excitingly presented in literature. But the tendency of all living talk draws it back and back into the common focus of humanity. Talk is a creature of the street and market-place, feeding on gossip; and its last resort is still in a discussion on morals. That is the heroic form of gossip; heroic in virtue of its high pretensions; but still gossip, because it turns on personalities. You can keep no men long, nor Scotsmen at all, off moral or theological discussion. These are to all the world what law is to lawyers; they are everybody's technicalities; the medium through which all consider life, and the dialect in which they express their judgments. I knew three young men who walked together daily for

some two months in a solemn and beautiful forest, and in cloudless summer weather ; daily they talked with unabated zest, and yet scarce wandered that whole time beyond two subjects—theology and love. And perhaps neither a court of love nor an assembly of divines would have granted their premisses or welcomed their conclusions.

Conclusions, indeed, are not often reached by talk any more than by private thinking. That is not the profit. The profit is in the exercise, and above all in the experience ; for when we reason at large on any subject, we review our state and history in life. From time to time, however, and specially, I think, in talking art, talk becomes effective, conquering like war, widening the boundaries of knowledge like an exploration. A point arises ; the question takes a problematical, a baffling, yet a likely air ; the talkers begin to feel lively presentiments of some conclusion near at hand ; towards this they strive with emulous ardour, each by his own path, and struggling for first utterance ; and then one leaps upon the summit of that matter with a shout, and almost at the same moment the other is beside him ; and behold they are agreed. Like enough, the progress is illusory, a mere cat's cradle having been wound and unwound out of words. But the sense of joint discovery is none the less giddy and inspiriting. And in the life of the talker such triumphs, though imaginary, are neither few nor far apart ; they are attained with speed and pleasure, in the hour of mirth ; and by the nature of the process, they are always worthily shared.

II *

IN the last paper there was perhaps too much about mere debate ; and there was nothing said at all about that kind of talk which is merely luminous and restful, a higher power of silence, the quiet of the evening shared by ruminating friends. There is something, aside from personal preference, to be alleged in support of this omission. Those who are no chimney-cornerers, who rejoice in the social thunderstorm, have a ground in reason for their choice. They get little rest indeed ; but restfulness is a quality for cattle ; the virtues are all active, life is alert, and it is in repose that men prepare themselves for evil. On the other hand, they are bruised into a knowledge of themselves and others ; they have in a high degree the fencer's pleasure in dexterity displayed and proved ; what they get they get upon life's terms, paying for it as they go ; and once the talk is launched, they are assured of honest dealing from an adversary eager like themselves. The aboriginal man within us, the cave-dweller, still lusty as when he fought tooth and nail for roots and berries, scents this kind of equal battle from afar ; it is like his old primeval days upon the crags, a return to the sincerity of savage life from the comfortable fictions of the civilised. And if it be delightful to the Old Man, it is none the less profitable to his younger brother, the conscientious gentleman. I feel never quite sure of your urbane and smiling coteries ; I fear they indulge a man's vanities in silence, suffer him to encroach, encourage him on to be an ass, and send him forth again, not merely condemned for the

* This sequel was called forth by an excellent article in *The Spectator*,

moment, but radically more contemptible than when he entered. But if I have a flushed, blustering fellow for my opposite, bent on carrying a point, my vanity is sure to have its ears rubbed, once at least, in the course of the debate. He will not spare me when we differ ; he will not fear to demonstrate my folly to my face.

For many natures there is not much charm in the still, chambered society, the circle of bland countenances, the digestive silence, the admired remark, the flutter of affectionate approval. They demand more atmosphere and exercise ; “ a gale upon their spirits,” as our pious ancestors would phrase it ; to have their wits well breathed in an uproarious Valhalla. And I suspect that the choice, given their character and faults, is one to be defended. The purely wise are silenced by facts ; they talk in a clear atmosphere, problems lying around them like a view in nature ; if they can be shown to be somewhat in the wrong, they digest the reproof like a thrashing, and make better intellectual blood. They stand corrected by a whisper ; a word or a glance reminds them of the great eternal law. But it is not so with all. Others in conversation seek rather contact with their fellow-men than increase of knowledge or clarity of thought. The drama, not the philosophy, of life is the sphere of their intellectual activity. Even when they pursue truth, they desire as much as possible of what we may call human scenery along the road they follow. They dwell in the heart of life ; the blood sounding in their ears, their eyes laying hold of what delights them with a brutal avidity that makes them blind to all besides, their interest riveted on people, living, loving, talking, tangible people. To a man of this description, the sphere of argument seems very pale and ghostly.

By a strong expression, a perturbed countenance, floods of tears, an insult which his conscience obliges him to swallow, he is brought round to knowledge which no syllogism would have conveyed to him. His own experience is so vivid, he is so superlatively conscious of himself, that if, day after day, he is allowed to hector and hear nothing but approving echoes, he will lose his hold on the soberness of things and take himself in earnest for a god. Talk might be to such an one the very way of moral ruin; the school where he might learn to be at once intolerable and ridiculous.

This character is perhaps commoner than philosophers suppose. And for persons of that stamp to learn much by conversation, they must speak with their superiors, not in intellect, for that is a superiority that must be proved, but in station. If they cannot find a friend to bully them for their good, they must find either an old man, a woman, or some one so far below them in the artificial order of society, that courtesy may be particularly exercised.

The best teachers are the aged. To the old our mouths are always partly closed; we must swallow our obvious retorts and listen. They sit above our heads, on life's raised daïs, and appeal at once to our respect and pity. A flavour of the old school, a touch of something different in their manner—which is freer and rounder, if they come of what is called a good family, and often more timid and precise if they are of the middle class—serves, in these days, to accentuate the difference of age and add a distinction to grey hairs. But their superiority is founded more deeply than by outward marks or gestures. They are before us in the march of man; they have more or less solved the irking problem; they have battled through the

equinox of life ; in good and evil they have held their course ; and now, without open shame, they near the crown and harbour. It may be we have been struck with one of fortune's darts ; we can scarce be civil, so cruelly is our spirit tossed. Yet long before we were so much as thought upon, the like calamity befell the old man or woman that now, with pleasant humour, rallies us upon our inattention, sitting composed in the holy evening of man's life, in the clear shining after rain. We grow ashamed of our distresses, new and hot and coarse, like villainous roadside brandy ; we see life in aerial perspective, under the heavens of faith ; and out of the worst, in the mere presence of contented elders, look forward and take patience. Fear shrinks before them " like a thing reproved," not the flitting and ineffectual fear of death, but the instant, dwelling terror of the responsibilities and revenges of life. Their speech, indeed, is timid ; they report lions in the path ; they counsel a meticulous footing ; but their serene, marred faces are more eloquent and tell another story. Where they have gone, we will go also, not very greatly fearing ; what they have endured unbroken, we also, God helping us, will make a shift to bear.

Not only is the presence of the aged in itself remedial, but their minds are stored with antidotes, wisdom's simples, plain considerations overlooked by youth. They have matter to communicate, be they never so stupid. Their talk is not merely literature, it is great literature ; classic in virtue of the speaker's detachment, studded, like a book of travel, with things we should not otherwise have learnt. In virtue, I have said, of the speaker's detachment,—and this is why, of two old men, the one who is not your father speaks to you with the more sensible authority ;

for in the paternal relation the oldest have lively interests and remain still young. Thus I have known two young men great friends ; each swore by the other's father ; the father of each swore by the other lad ; and yet each pair, of parent and child, were perpetually by the ears. This is typical : it reads like the germ of some kindly comedy.

X

THE MORALITY OF THE PROFESSION
OF LETTERS

THE profession of letters has been lately debated in the public prints ; and it has been debated, to put the matter mildly, from a point of view that was calculated to surprise high-minded men, and bring a general contempt on books and reading. Some time ago, in particular, a lively, pleasant, popular writer ¹ devoted an essay, lively and pleasant like himself, to a very encouraging view of the profession. We may be glad that his experience is so cheering, and we may hope that all others, who deserve it, shall be as handsomely rewarded ; but I do not think we need be at all glad to have this question, so important to the public and ourselves, debated solely on the ground of money. The salary in any business under heaven is not the only, nor indeed the first, question. That you should continue to exist is a matter for your own consideration ; but that your business should be first honest, and second useful, are points in which honour and

¹ Mr. James Payn.

morality are concerned. If the writer to whom I refer succeeds in persuading a number of young persons to adopt this way of life with an eye set singly on the livelihood, we must expect them in their works to follow profit only, and we must expect in consequence, if he will pardon me the epithets, a slovenly, base, untrue, and empty literature. Of that writer himself I am not speaking : he is diligent, clean, and pleasing ; we all owe him periods of entertainment, and he has achieved an amiable popularity which he has adequately deserved. But the truth is, he does not, or did not when he first embraced it, regard his profession from this purely mercenary side. He went into it, I shall venture to say, if not with any noble design, at least in the ardour of a first love ; and he enjoyed its practice long before he paused to calculate the wage. The other day an author was complimented on a piece of work, good in itself and exceptionally good for him, and replied in terms unworthy of a commercial traveller, that as the book was not briskly selling he did not give a copper farthing for its merit. It must not be supposed that the person to whom this answer was addressed received it as a profession of faith ; he knew, on the other hand, that it was only a whiff of irritation ; just as we know, when a respectable writer talks of literature as a way of life, like shoemaking, but not so useful, that he is only debating one aspect of a question, and is still clearly conscious of a dozen others more important in themselves and more central to the matter in hand. But while those who treat literature in this penny-wise and virtue-foolish spirit are themselves truly in possession of a better light, it does not follow that the treatment is decent or improving, whether for themselves or others. To treat all subjects in the highest, the most

honourable, and the pluckiest spirit, consistent with the fact, is the first duty of a writer. If he be well paid, as I am glad to hear he is, this duty becomes the more urgent, the neglect of it the more disgraceful. And perhaps there is no subject on which a man should speak so gravely as that industry, whatever it may be, which is the occupation or delight of his life; which is his tool to earn or serve with; and which, if it be unworthy, stamps himself as a mere incubus of dumb and greedy bowels on the shoulders of labouring humanity. On that subject alone even to force the note might lean to virtue's side. It is to be hoped that a numerous and enterprising generation of writers will follow and surpass the present one; but it would be better if the stream were stayed, and the roll of our old, honest English books were closed, than that esurient bookmakers should continue and debase a brave tradition, and lower, in their own eyes, a famous race. Better that our serene temples were deserted than filled with trafficking and juggling priests.

There are two just reasons for the choice of any way of life: the first is inbred taste in the chooser; the second some high utility in the industry selected. Literature, like any other art, is singularly interesting to the artist; and, in a degree peculiar to itself among the arts, it is useful to mankind. These are the sufficient justifications for any young man or woman who adopts it as the business of his life. I shall not say much about the wages. A writer can live by his writing. If not so luxuriously as by other trades, then less luxuriously. The nature of the work he does all day will more affect his happiness than the quality of his dinner at night. Whatever be your calling, and however much it brings you in the year,

you could still, you know, get more by cheating. We all suffer ourselves to be too much concerned about a little poverty ; but such considerations should not move us in the choice of that which is to be the business and justification of so great a portion of our lives ; and like the missionary, the patriot, or the philosopher, we should all choose that poor and brave career in which we can do the most and best for mankind. Now Nature, faithfully followed, proves herself a careful mother. A lad, for some liking to the jingle of words, betakes himself to letters for his life ; by-and-by, when he learns more gravity, he finds that he has chosen better than he knew ; that if he earns little, he is earning it amply ; that if he receives a small wage, he is in a position to do considerable services ; that it is in his power, in some small measure, to protect the oppressed and to defend the truth. So kindly is the world arranged, such great profit may arise from a small degree of human reliance on oneself, and such, in particular, is the happy star of this trade of writing, that it should combine pleasure and profit to both parties, and be at once agreeable, like fiddling, and useful, like good preaching.

This is to speak of literature at its highest ; and with the four great elders who are still spared to our respect and admiration, with Carlyle, Ruskin, Browning, and Tennyson before us, it would be cowardly to consider it at first in any lesser aspect. But while we cannot follow these athletes, while we may none of us, perhaps, be very vigorous, very original, or very wise, I still contend that, in the humblest sort of literary work, we have it in our power either to do great harm or great good. We may seek merely to please ; we may seek, having no higher gift, merely to gratify the idle nine-days' curiosity of our contemporaries ;

or we may essay, however feebly, to instruct. In each of these we shall have to deal with that remarkable art of words which, because it is the dialect of life, comes home so easily and powerfully to the minds of men; and since that is so, we contribute, in each of these branches, to build up the sum of sentiments and appreciations which goes by the name of Public Opinion or Public Feeling. The total of a nation's reading, in these days of daily papers, greatly modifies the total of the nation's speech; and the speech and reading, taken together, form the efficient educational medium of youth. A good man or woman may keep a youth some little while in clearer air; but the contemporary atmosphere is all-powerful in the end on the average of mediocre characters. The copious Corinthian baseness of the American reporter or the Parisian *chroniqueur*, both so lightly readable, must exercise an incalculable influence for ill; they touch upon all subjects, and on all with the same ungenerous hand; they begin the consideration of all, in young and unprepared minds, in an unworthy spirit; on all, they supply some pungency for dull people to quote. The mere body of this ugly matter overwhelms the rarer utterances of good men; the sneering, the selfish, and the cowardly are scattered in broad sheets on every table, while the antidote, in small volumes, lies unread upon the shelf. I have spoken of the American and French, not because they are so much baser, but so much more readable, than the English; their evil is done more effectively, in America for the masses, in French for the few that care to read; but with us as with them, the duties of literature are daily neglected, truth daily perverted and suppressed, and grave subjects daily degraded in the

treatment. The journalist is not reckoned an important officer ; yet judge of the good he might do, the harm he does ; judge of it by one instance only : that when we find two journals on the reverse sides of politics each, on the same day, openly garbling a piece of news for the interest of its own party, we smile at the discovery (no discovery now !) as over a good joke and pardonable stratagem. Lying so open is scarce lying, it is true ; but one of the things that we profess to teach our young is a respect for truth ; and I cannot think this piece of education will be crowned with any great success, so long as some of us practise and the rest openly approve of public falsehood.

There are two duties incumbent upon any man who enters on the business of writing : truth to the fact and a good spirit in the treatment. In every department of literature, though so low as hardly to deserve the name, truth to the fact is of importance to the education and comfort of mankind, and so hard to preserve, that the faithful trying to do so will lend some dignity to the man who tries it. Our judgments are based upon two things : first, upon the original preferences of our soul ; but, second, upon the mass of testimony to the nature of God, man, and the universe which reaches us, in divers manners, from without. For the most part these divers manners are reducible to one, all that we learn of past times and much that we learn of our own reaching us through the medium of books or papers, and even he who cannot read learning from the same source at second-hand and by the report of him who can. Thus the sum of the contemporary knowledge or ignorance of good and evil is, in large measure, the handiwork of those who write. Those who write have to see that each man's knowledge is, as near as they can

make it, answerable to the facts of life ; that he shall not suppose himself an angel or a monster ; nor take this world for a hell ; nor be suffered to imagine that all rights are concentrated in his own caste or country, or all veracities in his own parochial creed. Each man should learn what is within him, that he may strive to mend ; he must be taught what is without him, that he may be kind to others. It can never be wrong to tell him the truth ; for, in his disputable state, weaving as he goes his theory of life, steering himself, cheering or reproving others, all facts are of the first importance to his conduct ; and even if a fact shall discourage or corrupt him, it is still best that he should know it ; for it is in this world as it is, and not in a world made easy by educational suppressions, that he must win his way to shame or glory. In one word, it must always be foul to tell what is false ; and it can never be safe to suppress what is true. The very fact that you omit may be the fact which somebody was wanting, for one man's meat is another man's poison, and I have known a person who was cheered by the perusal of "*Candide*." Every fact is a part of that great puzzle we must set together ; and none that comes directly in a writer's path but has some nice relations, unperceivable by him, to the totality and bearing of the subject under hand. Yet there are certain classes of fact eternally more necessary than others, and it is with these that literature must first bestir itself. They are not hard to distinguish, nature once more easily leading us ; for the necessary, because the efficacious, facts are those which are most interesting to the natural mind of man. Those which are coloured, picturesque, human, and rooted in morality, and those, on the other hand, which are clear, indisputable, and a part

of science, are alone vital in importance, seizing by their interest, or useful to communicate. So far as the writer merely narrates, he should principally tell of these. He should tell of the kind and wholesome and beautiful elements of our life; he should tell unsparingly of the evil and sorrow of the present, to move us with instances; he should tell of wise and good people in the past, to excite us by example; and of these he should tell soberly and truthfully, not glossing faults, that we may neither grow discouraged with ourselves nor exacting to our neighbours. So the body of contemporary literature, ephemeral and feeble in itself, touches in the minds of men the springs of thought and kindness, and supports them (for those who will go at all are easily supported) on their way to what is true and right. And if, in any degree, it does so now, how much more might it do so if the writers chose! There is not a life in all the records of the past but, properly studied, might lend a hint and a help to some contemporary. There is not a juncture in to-day's affairs but some useful word may yet be said of it. Even the reporter has an office, and, with clear eyes and honest language, may unveil injustices and point the way to progress. And for a last word: in all narration there is only one way to be clever, and that is to be exact. To be vivid is a secondary quality which must presuppose the first; for vividly to convey a wrong impression is only to make failure conspicuous.

But a fact may be viewed on many sides; it may be chronicled with rage, tears, laughter, indifference, or admiration, and by each of these the story will be transformed to something else. The newspapers that told of the return of our representatives from Berlin, even if they had not differed as to the facts, would

have sufficiently differed by their spirit ; so that the one description would have been a second ovation, and the other a prolonged insult. The subject makes but a trifling part of any piece of literature, and the view of the writer is itself a fact more important because less disputable than the others. Now this spirit in which a subject is regarded, important in all kinds of literary work, becomes all-important in works of fiction, meditation, or rhapsody ; for there it not only colours but itself chooses the facts ; not only modifies but shapes the work. And hence, over the far larger proportion of the field of literature, the health or disease of the writer's mind or momentary humour forms not only the leading feature of his work, but is, at bottom, the only thing he can communicate to others. In all works of art, widely speaking, it is first of all the author's attitude that is narrated, though in the attitude there be implied a whole experience and a theory of life. An author who has begged the question and reposes in some narrow faith cannot, if he would, express the whole or even many of the sides of this various existence ; for, his own life being maim, some of them are not admitted in his theory, and were only dimly and unwillingly recognised in his experience. Hence the smallness, the triteness, and the inhumanity in works of merely sectarian religion ; and hence we find equal although unsimilar limitations in works inspired by the spirit of the flesh or the despicable taste for high society. So that the first duty of any man who is to write is intellectual. Designedly or not, he has so far set himself up for a leader of the minds of men ; and he must see that his own mind is kept supple, charitable, and bright. Everything but prejudice should find a voice through him ; he should see the good in all things ; where he

has even a fear that he does not wholly understand, there he should be wholly silent; and he should recognise from the first that he has only one tool in his workshop and that tool is sympathy.¹

The second duty, far harder to define, is moral. There are a thousand different humours in the mind, and about each of them, when it is uppermost, some literature tends to be deposited. Is this to be allowed? not certainly in every case, and yet perhaps in more than rigorists would fancy. It were to be desired that all literary work, and chiefly works of art, issued from sound, human, healthy, and potent impulses, whether grave or laughing, humorous, romantic, or religious. Yet it cannot be denied that some valuable books are partially insane; some, mostly religious, partially inhuman; and very many tainted with morbidity and impotence. We do not loathe a masterpiece although we gird against its blemishes. We are not, above all, to look for faults but merits. There is no book perfect, even in design; but there are many that will delight, improve, or encourage the reader. On the one hand, the Hebrew Psalms are the only religious poetry on earth; yet they contain sallies that savour rankly of the man of blood. On the other hand, Alfred de Musset had a poisoned and a contorted nature; I am only quoting that generous and frivolous giant, old Dumas, when I accuse him of a bad heart; yet, when the impulse under which he wrote was purely creative, he could give us works like "*Carmosine*" or "*Fantasio*," in which the last

¹ A footnote, at least, is due to the admirable example set before all young writers in the width of literary sympathy displayed by Mr. Swinburne. He runs forth to welcome merit, whether in Dickens or Trollope, whether in Villon, Milton, or Pope. This is, in criticism, the attitude we should all seek to preserve, not only in that, but in every branch of literary work.

note of the romantic comedy seems to have been found again to touch and please us. When Flaubert wrote "*Madame Bovary*," I believe he thought chiefly of a somewhat morbid realism ; and behold ! the book turned in his hands into a masterpiece of appalling morality. But the truth is, when books are conceived under a great stress, with a soul of nine-fold power nine times heated and electrified by effort, the conditions of our being are seized with such an ample grasp, that, even should the main design be trivial or base, some truth and beauty cannot fail to be expressed. Out of the strong comes forth sweetness ; but an ill thing poorly done is an ill thing top and bottom. And so this can be no encouragement to knock-knee'd, feeble-wristed scribes, who must take their business conscientiously or be ashamed to practise it.

Man is imperfect ; yet, in his literature, he must express himself and his own views and preferences ; for to do anything else is to do a far more perilous thing than to risk being immoral : it is to be sure of being untrue. To ape a sentiment, even a good one, is to travesty a sentiment ; that will not be helpful. To conceal a sentiment, if you are sure you hold it, is to take a liberty with truth. There is probably no point of view possible to a sane man but contains some truth and, in the true connection, might be profitable to the race. I am not afraid of the truth, if any one could tell it me, but I am afraid of parts of it impertinently uttered. There is a time to dance and a time to mourn ; to be harsh as well as to be sentimental ; to be ascetic as well as to glorify the appetites ; and if a man were to combine all these extremes into his work, each in its place and proportion, that work would be the world's masterpiece of morality as well as of

art. Partiality is immorality ; for any book is wrong that gives a misleading picture of the world and life. The trouble is that the weakling must be partial ; the work of one proving dank and depressing ; of another, cheap and vulgar ; of a third, epileptically sensual ; of a fourth, sourly ascetic. In literature as in conduct, you can never hope to do exactly right. All you can do is to make as sure as possible ; and for that there is but one rule. Nothing should be done in a hurry that can be done slowly. It is no use to write a book and put it by for nine or even ninety years ; for in the writing you will have partly convinced yourself ; the delay must precede any beginning ; and if you meditate a work of art, you should first long roll the subject under the tongue to make sure you like the flavour, before you brew a volume that shall taste of it from end to end ; or if you propose to enter on the field of controversy, you should first have thought upon the question under all conditions, in health as well as in sickness, in sorrow as well as in joy. It is this nearness of examination necessary for any true and kind writing, that makes the practice of the art a prolonged and noble education for the writer.

There is plenty to do, plenty to say, or to say over again, in the meantime. Any literary work which conveys faithful facts or pleasing impressions is a service to the public. It is even a service to be thankfully proud of having rendered. The slightest novels are a blessing to those in distress, not chloroform itself a greater. Our fine old sea-captain's life was justified when Carlyle soothed his mind with "The King's Own" or "Newton Forster." To please is to serve ; and so far from its being difficult to instruct while you amuse, it is difficult to do the one thoroughly without

the other. Some part of the writer or his life will crop out in even a vapid book ; and to read a novel that was conceived with any force is to multiply experience and to exercise the sympathies. Every article, every piece of verse, every essay, every *entrefilet*, is destined to pass, however swiftly, through the minds of some portion of the public, and to colour, however transiently, their thoughts. When any subject falls to be discussed, some scribbler on a paper has the invaluable opportunity of beginning its discussion in a dignified and human spirit ; and if there were enough who did so in our public press, neither the public nor the parliament would find it in their minds to drop to meaner thoughts. The writer has the chance to stumble, by the way, on something pleasing, something interesting, something encouraging, were it only to a single reader. He will be unfortunate, indeed, if he suit no one. He has the chance, besides, to stumble on something that a dull person shall be able to comprehend ; and for a dull person to have read anything and, for that once, comprehended it, makes a marking epoch in his education.

Here then is work worth doing and worth trying to do well. And so, if I were minded to welcome any great accession to our trade, it should not be from any reason of a higher wage, but because it was a trade which was useful in a very great and in a very high degree ; which every honest tradesman could make more serviceable to mankind in his single strength ; which was difficult to do well and possible to do better every year ; which called for scrupulous thought on the part of all who practised it, and hence became a perpetual education to their nobler natures ; and which, pay it as you please, in the large majority of the best cases will still be underpaid. For surely,

at this time of day in the nineteenth century, there is nothing that an honest man should fear more timorously than getting and spending more than he deserves.

XI

BOOKS WHICH HAVE INFLUENCED ME

THE Editor ¹ has somewhat insidiously laid a trap for his correspondents, the question put appearing at first so innocent, truly cutting so deep. It is not, indeed, until after some reconnaissance and review that the writer awakes to find himself engaged upon something in the nature of autobiography, or, perhaps worse, upon a chapter in the life of that little, beautiful brother whom we once all had, and whom we have all lost and mourned, the man we ought to have been, the man we hoped to be. But when word has been passed (even to an editor), it should, if possible, be kept; and if sometimes I am wise and say too little, and sometimes weak and say too much, the blame must lie at the door of the person who entrapped me.

The most influential books, and the truest in their influence, are works of fiction. They do not pin the reader to a dogma, which he must afterwards discover to be inexact; they do not teach him a lesson, which he must afterwards unlearn. They repeat, they rearrange, they clarify the lessons of life; they disengage us from ourselves, they constrain us to the acquaintance of others; and they show us the web

¹ Of *The British Weekly*.

of experience, not as we can see it for ourselves, but with a singular change—that monstrous, consuming *ego* of ours being, for the nonce, struck out. To be so, they must be reasonably true to the human comedy; and any work that is so serves the turn of instruction. But the course of our education is answered best by those poems and romances where we breathe a magnanimous atmosphere of thought and meet generous and pious characters. Shakespeare has served me best. Few living friends have had upon me an influence so strong for good as Hamlet or Rosalind. The last character, already well beloved in the reading, I had the good fortune to see, I must think, in an impressionable hour, played by Mrs. Scott Siddons. Nothing has ever more moved, more delighted, more refreshed me; nor has the influence quite passed away. Kent's brief speech over the dying Lear had a great effect upon my mind, and was the burthen of my reflections for long, so profoundly, so touchingly generous did it appear in sense, so over-powering in expression. Perhaps my dearest and best friend outside of Shakespeare is D'Artagnan—the elderly D'Artagnan of the “*Vicomte de Bragelonne*.” I know not a more human soul, nor, in his way, a finer; I shall be very sorry for the man who is so much of a pedant in morals that he cannot learn from the Captain of Musketeers. Lastly, I must name the “*Pilgrim's Progress*,” a book that breathes of every beautiful and valuable emotion.

But of works of art little can be said; their influence is profound and silent, like the influence of nature; they mould by contact; we drink them up like water, and are bettered, yet know not how. It is in books more specifically didactic that we can follow out the effect, and distinguish and weigh and compare.

A book which has been very influential upon me fell early into my hands, and so may stand first, though I think its influence was only sensible later on, and perhaps still keeps growing, for it is a book not easily outlived: the "Essais" of Montaigne. That temperate and genial picture of life is a great gift to place in the hands of persons of to-day; they will find in these smiling pages a magazine of heroism and wisdom, all of an antique strain; they will have their "linen decencies" and excited orthodoxies fluttered, and will (if they have any gift of reading) perceive that these have not been fluttered without some excuse and ground of reason; and (again if they have any gift of reading) they will end by seeing that this old gentleman was in a dozen ways a finer fellow, and held in a dozen ways a nobler view of life, than they or their contemporaries.

The next book, in order of time, to influence me was the New Testament, and in particular the Gospel according to St. Matthew. I believe it would startle and move any one if they could make a certain effort of imagination and read it freshly like a book, not droningly and dully like a portion of the Bible. Any one would then be able to see in it those truths which we are all courteously supposed to know and all modestly refrain from applying. But upon this subject it is perhaps better to be silent.

I come next to Whitman's "Leaves of Grass," a book of singular service, a book which tumbled the world upside down for me, blew into space a thousand cobwebs of genteel and ethical illusion, and, having thus shaken my tabernacle of lies, set me back again upon a strong foundation of all the original and manly virtues. But it is, once more, only a book for those who have the gift of reading. I will be very frank—

I believe it is so with all good books, except, perhaps, fiction. The average man lives, and must live, so wholly in convention, that gunpowder charges of the truth are more apt to discompose than to invigorate his creed. Either he cries out upon blasphemy and indecency, and crouches the closer round that little idol of part-truths and part-conveniences which is the contemporary deity, or he is convinced by what is new, forgets what is old, and becomes truly blasphemous and indecent himself. New truth is only useful to supplement the old; rough truth is only wanted to expand, not to destroy, our civil and often elegant conventions. He who cannot judge had better stick to fiction and the daily papers. There he will get little harm, and, in the first at least, some good.

Close upon the back of my discovery of Whitman, I came under the influence of Herbert Spencer. No more persuasive rabbi exists, and few better. How much of his vast structure will bear the touch of time, how much is clay and how much brass, it were too curious to inquire. But his words, if dry, are always manly and honest; there dwells in his pages a spirit of highly abstract joy, plucked naked like an algebraic symbol, but still joyful; and the reader will find there a *caput-mortuum* of piety, with little indeed of its loveliness, but with most of its essentials; and these two qualities make him a wholesome, as his intellectual vigour makes him a bracing, writer. I should be much of a hound if I lost my gratitude to Herbert Spencer.

"Goethe's Life," by Lewes, had a great importance for me when it first fell into my hands—a strange instance of the partiality of man's good and man's evil. I know no one whom I less admire than Goethe; he seems a very epitome of the sins of genius, breaking

open the doors of private life, and wantonly wounding friends, in that crowning offence of "Werther," and in his own character a mere pen-and-ink Napoleon, conscious of the rights and duties of superior talents as a Spanish inquisitor was conscious of the rights and duties of his office. And yet in his fine devotion to his art, in his honest and serviceable friendship for Schiller, what lessons are contained! Biography, usually so false to its office, does here for once perform for us some of the work of fiction, reminding us, that is, of the truly mingled tissue of man's nature, and how huge faults and shining virtues cohabit and persevere in the same character. History serves us well to this effect, but in the originals, not in the pages of the popular epitomiser, who is bound, by the very nature of his task, to make us feel the difference of epochs instead of the essential identity of man, and even in the originals only to those who can recognise their own human virtues and defects in strange forms, often inverted and under strange names, often interchanged. Martial is a poet of no good repute, and it gives a man new thoughts to read his works dispassionately, and find in this unseemly jester's serious passages the image of a kind, wise, and self-respecting gentleman. It is customary, I suppose, in reading Martial, to leave out these pleasant verses; I never heard of them, at least, until I found them for myself; and this partiality is one among a thousand things that help to build up our distorted and hysterical conception of the great Roman empire.

This brings us by a natural transition to a very noble book—the "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius. The dispassionate gravity, the noble forgetfulness of self, the tenderness of others, that are there expressed and were practised on so great a scale in the life of its

writer, make this book a book quite by itself. No one can read it and not be moved. Yet it scarcely or rarely appeals to the feelings—those very mobile, those not very trusty parts of man. Its address lies further back : its lesson comes more deeply home ; when you have read, you carry away with you a memory of the man himself ; it is as though you had touched a loyal hand, looked into brave eyes, and made a noble friend ; there is another bond on you thenceforward, binding you to life and to the love of virtue.

Wordsworth should perhaps come next. Every one has been influenced by Wordsworth, and it is hard to tell precisely how. A certain innocence, a rugged austerity of joy, a sight of the stars, “ the silence that is in the lonely hills,” something of the cold thrill of dawn, cling to his work and give it a particular address to what is best in us. I do not know that you learn a lesson ; you need not—Mill did not—agree with any one of his beliefs ; and yet the spell is cast. Such are the best teachers : a dogma learned is only a new error—the old one was perhaps as good ; but a spirit communicated is a perpetual possession. These best teachers climb beyond teaching to the plane of art ; it is themselves, and what is best in themselves, that they communicate.

I should never forgive myself if I forgot “ *The Egoist*.” It is art, if you like, but it belongs purely to didactic art, and from all the novels I have read (and I have read thousands) stands in a place by itself. Here is a Nathan for the modern David ; here is a book to send the blood into men’s faces. Satire, the angry picture of human faults, is not great art ; we can all be angry with our neighbour ; what we want is to be shown, not his defects, of which we are too conscious, but his merits, to which we are too blind.

And "The Egoist" is a satire; so much must be allowed; but it is a satire of a singular quality, which tells you nothing of that obvious mote, which is engaged from first to last with that invisible beam. It is yourself that is hunted down; these are your own faults that are dragged into the day and numbered, with lingering relish, with cruel cunning and precision. A young friend of Mr. Meredith's (as I have the story) came to him in an agony. "This is too bad of you," he cried. "Willoughby is me!" "No, my dear fellow," said the author, "he is all of us." I have read "The Egoist" five or six times myself, and I mean to read it again; for I am like the young friend of the anecdote—I think Willoughby an unmanly but a very serviceable exposure of myself.

I suppose, when I am done, I shall find that I have forgotten much that was most influential, as I see already I have forgotten Thoreau, and Hazlitt, whose paper "On the Spirit of Obligations" was a turning-point in my life, and Penn, whose little book of aphorisms had a brief but strong effect on me, and Mitford's "Tales of Old Japan," wherein I learned for the first time the proper attitude of any rational man to his country's laws—a secret found, and kept, in the Asiatic islands. That I should commemorate all is more than I can hope or the editor could ask. It will be more to the point, after having said so much upon improving books, to say a word or two about the improvable reader. The gift of reading, as I have called it, is not very common, nor very generally understood. It consists, first of all, in a vast intellectual endowment—a free grace, I find I must call it—by which a man rises to understand that he is not punctually right, nor those from whom he differs absolutely wrong. He may hold dogmas; he may

hold them passionately ; and he may know that others hold them but coldly, or hold them differently, or hold them not at all. Well, if he has the gift of reading, these others will be full of meat for him. They will see the other side of propositions and the other side of virtues. He need not change his dogma for that, but he may change his reading of that dogma, and he must supplement and correct his deductions from it. A human truth, which is always very much a lie, hides as much of life as it displays. It is men who hold another truth, or, as it seems to us, perhaps, a dangerous lie, who can extend our restricted field of knowledge, and rouse our drowsy consciences. Something that seems quite new, or that seems insolently false or very dangerous, is the test of a reader. If he tries to see what it means, what truth excuses it, he has the gift, and let him read. If he is merely hurt, or offended, or exclaims upon his author's folly, he had better take to the daily papers ; he will never be a reader.

And here, with the aptest illustrative force, after I have laid down my part-truth, I must step in with its opposite. For, after all, we are vessels of a very limited content. Not all men can read all books ; it is only in a chosen few that any man will find his appointed food ; and the fittest lessons are the most palatable, and make themselves welcome to the mind. A writer learns this early, and it is his chief support ; he goes on unafraid, laying down the law ; and he is sure at heart that most of what he says is demonstrably false, and much of a mingled strain, and some hurtful, and very little good for service ; but he is sure besides that when his words fall into the hands of any genuine reader, they will be weighed and winnowed, and only that which suits will be assimilated ;

and when they fall into the hands of one who cannot intelligently read, they come there quite silent and inarticulate, falling upon deaf ears, and his secret is kept as if he had not written.

XII

LETTER TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO PROPOSES TO EMBRACE THE CAREER OF ART

WITH the agreeable frankness of youth, you address me on a point of some practical importance to yourself and (it is even conceivable) of some gravity to the world : Should you or should you not become an artist ? It is one which you must decide entirely for yourself ; all that I can do is to bring under your notice some of the materials of that decision ; and I will begin, as I shall probably conclude also, by assuring you that all depends on the vocation.

To know what you like is the beginning of wisdom and of old age. Youth is wholly experimental. The essence and charm of that unquiet and delightful epoch is ignorance of self as well as ignorance of life. These two unknowns the young man brings together again and again, now in the airiest touch, now with a bitter hug ; now with exquisite pleasure, now with cutting pain ; but never with indifference, to which he is a total stranger, and never with that near kinsman or indifference, contentment. If he be a youth of dainty senses or a brain easily heated, the interest of this series of experiments grows upon him out of all

proportion to the pleasure he receives. It is not beauty that he loves, nor pleasure that he seeks, though he may think so ; his design and his sufficient reward is to verify his own existence and taste the variety of human fate. To him, before the razor-edge of curiosity is dulled, all that is not actual living and the hot chase of experience wears a face of a disgusting dryness difficult to recall in later days ; or if there be any exception—and here destiny steps in—it is in those moments when, wearied or surfeited of the primary activity of the senses, he calls up before memory the image of transacted pains and pleasures. Thus it is that such an one shies from all cut-and-dry professions, and inclines insensibly toward that career of art which consists only in the tasting and recording of experience.

This, which is not so much a vocation for art as an impatience of all other honest trades, frequently exists alone ; and, so existing, it will pass gently away in the course of years. Emphatically, it is not to be regarded ; it is not a vocation, but a temptation ; and when your father the other day so fiercely and (in my view) so properly discouraged your ambition, he was recalling not improbably some similar passage in his own experience. For the temptation is perhaps nearly as common as the vocation is rare. But again we have vocations which are imperfect ; we have men whose minds are bound up, not so much in any art, as in the general *ars artium* and common base of all creative work ; who will now dip into painting, and now study counterpoint, and anon will be inditing a sonnet : all these with equal interest, all often with genuine knowledge. And of this temper, when it stands alone, I find it difficult to speak ; but I should counsel such an one to take to letters, for in literature

(which drags with so wide a net) all his information may be found some day useful, and if he should go on as he has begun, and turn at last into the critic, he will have learned to use the necessary tools. Lastly we come to those vocations which are at once decisive and precise ; to the men who are born with the love of pigments, the passion of drawing, the gift of music, or the impulse to create with words, just as other and perhaps the same men are born with the love of hunting, or the sea, or horses, or the turning-lathe. These are predestined ; if a man love the labour of any trade, apart from any question of success or fame, the gods have called him. He may have the general vocation too : he may have a taste for all the arts, and I think he often has ; but the mark of his calling is this laborious partiality for one, this inextinguishable zest in its technical successes, and (perhaps above all) a certain candour of mind, to take his very trifling enterprise with a gravity that would befit the cares of empire, and to think the smallest improvement worth accomplishing at any expense of time and industry. The book, the statue, the sonata, must be gone upon with the unreasoning good faith and the unflagging spirit of children at their play. *Is it worth doing ?*—when it shall have occurred to any artist to ask himself that question, it is implicitly answered in the negative. It does not occur to the child as he plays at being a pirate on the dining-room sofa, nor to the hunter as he pursues his quarry ; and the candour of the one and the ardour of the other should be united in the bosom of the artist.

If you recognise in yourself some such decisive taste, there is no room for hesitation : follow your bent. And observe (lest I should too much discourage

you) that the disposition does not usually burn so brightly at the first, or rather not so constantly. Habit and practice sharpen gifts; the necessity of toil grows less disgusting, grows even welcome, in the course of years; a small taste (if it be only genuine) waxes with indulgence into an exclusive passion. Enough, just now, if you can look back over a fair interval, and see that your chosen art has a little more than held its own among the thronging interests of youth. Time will do the rest, if devotion help it; and soon your every thought will be engrossed in that beloved occupation.

But even with devotion, you may remind me, even with unfaltering and delighted industry, many thousand artists spend their lives, if the result be regarded, utterly in vain: a thousand artists, and never one work of art. But the vast mass of mankind are incapable of doing anything reasonably well, art among the rest. The worthless artist would not improbably have been a quite incompetent baker. And the artist, even if he does not amuse the public, amuses himself; so that there will always be one man the happier for his vigils. This is the practical side of art: its inexpugnable fortress for the true practitioner. The direct returns—the wages of the trade—are small, but the indirect—the wages of the life—are incalculably great. No other business offers a man his daily bread upon such joyful terms. The soldier and the explorer have moments of a worthier excitement, but they are purchased by cruel hardships and periods of tedium that beggar language. In the life of the artist there need be no hour without its pleasure. I take the author, with whose career I am best acquainted; and it is true he works in a rebellious material, and that the act of writing is

cramped and trying both to the eyes and the temper ; but remark him in his study, when matter crowds upon him and words are not wanting—in what a continual series of small successes time flows by ; with what a sense of power, as of one moving mountains, he marshals his petty characters ; with what pleasures, both of the ear and eye, he sees his airy structure growing on the page ; and how he labours in a craft to which the whole material of his life is tributary, and which opens a door to all his tastes, his loves, his hatreds, and his convictions, so that what he writes is only what he longed to utter. He may have enjoyed many things in this big, tragic playground of the world ; but what shall he have enjoyed more fully than a morning of successful work ? Suppose it ill-paid : the wonder is it should be paid at all. Other men pay, and pay dearly, for pleasures less desirable.

Nor will the practice of art afford you pleasure only ; it affords besides an admirable training. For the artist works entirely upon honour. The public knows little or nothing of those merits in the quest of which you are condemned to spend the bulk of your endeavours. Merits of design, the merit of first-hand energy, the merit of a certain cheap accomplishment which a man of the artistic temper easily acquires—these they can recognise, and these they value. But to those more exquisite refinements of proficiency and finish, which the artist so ardently desires and so keenly feels, for which (in the vigorous words of Balzac) he must toil “ like a miner buried in a landslip,” for which, day after day, he recasts and revises and rejects—the gross mass of the public must be ever blind. To those lost pains, suppose you attain the highest pitch of merit, posterity may

possibly do justice ; suppose, as is so probable, you fail by even a hair's breadth of the highest, rest certain they shall never be observed. Under the shadow of this cold thought, alone in his studio, the artist must preserve from day to day his constancy to the ideal. It is this which makes his life noble ; it is by this that the practice of his craft strengthens and matures his character ; it is for this that even the serious countenance of the great emperor was turned approvingly (if only for a moment) on the followers of Apollo, and that sternly gentle voice bade the artist cherish his art.

And here there fall two warnings to be made. First, if you are to continue to be a law to yourself, you must beware of the first signs of laziness. This idealism in honesty can only be supported by perpetual effort ; the standard is easily lowered, the artist who says "*It will do,*" is on the downward path ; three or four pot-boilers are enough at times (above all at wrong times) to falsify a talent, and by the practice of journalism a man runs the risk of becoming wedded to cheap finish. This is the danger on the one side ; there is not less upon the other. The consciousness of how much the artist is (and must be) a law to himself debauches the small heads. Perceiving recondite merits very hard to attain, making or swallowing artistic formulæ, or perhaps falling in love with some particular proficiency of his own, many artists forget the end of all art : to please. It is doubtless tempting to exclaim against the ignorant bourgeois ; yet it should not be forgotten, it is he who is to pay us, and that (surely on the face of it) for services that he shall desire to have performed. Here also, if properly considered, there is a question of transcendental honesty. To give the public what they

do not want, and yet expect to be supported: we have there a strange pretension, and yet not uncommon, above all with painters. The first duty in this world is for a man to pay his way; when that is quite accomplished, he may plunge into what eccentricity he likes; but emphatically not till then. Till then, he must pay assiduous court to the bourgeois who carries the purse. And if in the course of these capitulations he shall falsify his talent, it can never have been a strong one, and he will have preserved a better thing than talent—character. Or if he be of a mind so independent that he cannot stoop to this necessity, one course is yet open: he can desist from art, and follow some more manly way of life.

I speak of a more manly way of life; it is a point on which I must be frank. To live by a pleasure is not a high calling; it involves patronage, however veiled; it numbers the artist, however ambitious, along with dancing girls and billiard-markers. The French have a romantic evasion for one employment, and call its practitioners the Daughters of Joy. The artist is of the same family, he is of the Sons of Joy, chose his trade to please himself, gains his livelihood by pleasing others, and has parted with something of the sterner dignity of man. Journals but a little while ago declaimed against the Tennyson peerage; and this Son of Joy was blamed for condescension when he followed the example of Lord Lawrence and Lord Cairns and Lord Clyde. The poet was more happily inspired; with a better modesty he accepted the honour; and anonymous journalists have not yet (if I am to believe them) recovered the vicarious disgrace to their profession. When it comes to their turn, these gentlemen can do themselves more justice; and I shall be glad to think of it; for to my

barbarian eyesight, even Lord Tennyson looks somewhat out of place in that assembly. There should be no honours for the artist; he has already, in the practice of his art, more than his share of the rewards of life; the honours are pre-empted for other trades, less agreeable and perhaps more useful.

But the devil in these trades of pleasing is to fail to please. In ordinary occupations, a man offers to do a certain thing or to produce a certain article with a merely conventional accomplishment, a design in which (we may almost say) it is difficult to fail. But the artist steps forth out of the crowd and proposes to delight: an impudent design, in which it is impossible to fail without odious circumstances. The poor Daughter of Joy, carrying her smiles and finery quite unregarded through the crowd, makes a figure which it is impossible to recall without a wounding pity. She is the type of the unsuccessful artist. The actor, the dancer, and the singer must appear like her in person, and drain publicly the cup of failure. But though the rest of us escape this crowning bitterness of the pillory, we all court in essence the same humiliation. We all profess to be able to delight. And how few of us are! We all pledge ourselves to be able to continue to delight. And the day will come to each, and even to the most admired, when the ardour shall have declined and the cunning shall be lost, and he shall sit by his deserted booth ashamed. Then shall he see himself condemned to do work for which he blushes to take payment. Then (as if his lot were not already cruel) he must lie exposed to the gibes of the wreckers of the press, who earn a little bitter bread by the condemnation of trash which they have not read, and the praise of excellence which they cannot understand.

And observe that this seems almost the necessary end at least of writers. "Les Blancs et les Bleus" (for instance) is of an order of merit very different from "Le Vicomte de Bragelonne"; and if any gentleman can bear to spy upon the nakedness of "Castle Dangerous," his name I think is Ham: let it be enough for the rest of us to read of it (not without tears) in the pages of Lockhart. Thus in old age, when occupation and comfort are most needful, the writer must lay aside at once his pastime and his breadwinner. The painter indeed, if he succeed at all in engaging the attention of the public, gains great sums and can stand to his easel until a great age without dishonourable failure. The writer has the double misfortune to be ill-paid while he can work, and to be incapable of working when he is old. It is thus a way of life which conducts directly to a false position.

For the writer (in spite of notorious examples to the contrary) must look to be ill-paid. Tennyson and Montépin make handsome livelihoods; but we cannot all hope to be Tennyson, and we do not all perhaps desire to be Montépin. If you adopt an art to be your trade, weed your mind at the outset of all desire of money. What you may decently expect, if you have some talent and much industry, is such an income as a clerk will earn with a tenth or perhaps a twentieth of your nervous output. Nor have you the right to look for more; in the wages of the life, not in the wages of the trade, lies your reward; the work is here the wages. It will be seen I have little sympathy with the common lamentations of the artist class. Perhaps they do not remember the hire of the field labourer; or do they think no parallel will lie? Perhaps they have never observed what is the retiring allowance of a field officer; or do they suppose their contributions

to the arts of pleasing more important than the services of a colonel? Perhaps they forget on how little Millet was content to live; or do they think, because they have less genius, they stand excused from the display of equal virtues? But upon one point there should be no dubiety: if a man be not frugal, he has no business in the arts. If he be not frugal, he steers directly for that last tragic scene of *le vieux saltimbanque*; if he be not frugal, he will find it hard to continue to be honest. Some day, when the butcher is knocking at the door, he may be tempted, he may be obliged, to turn out and sell a slovenly piece of work. If the obligation shall have arisen through no wantonness of his own, he is even to be commended; for words cannot describe how far more necessary it is that a man should support his family, than that he should attain to—or preserve—distinction in the arts. But if the pressure comes through his own fault, he has stolen, and stolen under trust, and stolen (which is the worst of all) in such a way that no law can reach him.

And now you may perhaps ask me whether—if the débutant artist is to have no thought of money, and if (as is implied) he is to expect no honours from the State—he may not at least look forward to the delights of popularity? Praise, you will tell me, is a savoury dish. And in so far as you may mean the countenance of other artists, you would put your finger on one of the most essential and enduring pleasures of the career of art. But in so far as you should have an eye to the commendations of the public or the notice of the newspapers, be sure you would but be cherishing a dream. It is true that in certain esoteric journals the author (for instance) is duly criticised, and that he is often praised a great deal more than he deserves, sometimes

for qualities which he prided himself on eschewing, and sometimes by ladies and gentlemen who have denied themselves the privilege of reading his work. But if a man be sensitive to this wild praise, we must suppose him equally alive to that which often accompanies and always follows it—wild ridicule. A man may have done well for years, and then he may fail; he will hear of his failure. Or he may have done well for years, and still do well, but the critics may have tired of praising him, or there may have sprung up some new idol of the instant, some “dust a little gilt,” to whom they now prefer to offer sacrifice. Here is the obverse and the reverse of that empty and ugly thing called popularity. Will any man suppose it worth the gaining?

XIII

LAY MORALS

I

THE evading of the police will not long satisfy an active conscience or a thoughtful head. But to show you how one or the other may trouble a man, and what a vast extent of frontier is left unridden by this invaluable eighth commandment, let me tell you a few pages out of a young man's life.

He was a friend of mine; a young man like others; generous, flighty, as variable as youth itself, but always with some high motions and on the search for higher thoughts of life. I should tell you at once that he

thoroughly agrees with the eighth commandment. But he got hold of some unsettling works, the New Testament among others, and this loosened his views of life and led him into many perplexities. As he was the son of a man in a certain position, and well off, my friend had enjoyed from the first the advantages of education, nay, he had been kept alive through a sickly childhood by constant watchfulness, comforts, and change of air; for all of which he was indebted to his father's wealth.

At college he met other lads more diligent than himself, who followed the plough in summer-time to pay their college fees in winter; and this inequality struck him with some force. He was at that age of a conversible temper, and insatiably curious in the aspects of life; and he spent much of his time scraping acquaintance with all classes of man- and woman-kind. In this way he came upon many depressed ambitions, and many intelligences stunted for want of opportunity; and this also struck him. He began to perceive that life was a handicap upon strange, wrong-sided principles; and not, as he had been told, a fair and equal race. He began to tremble that he himself had been unjustly favoured, when he saw all the avenues of wealth, and power, and comfort closed against so many of his superiors and equals, and held unwearyingly open before so idle, so desultory, and so dissolute a being as himself. There sat a youth beside him on the college benches who had only one shirt to his back, and, at intervals sufficiently far apart, must stay at home to have it washed. It was my friend's principle to stay away as often as he dared; for I fear he was no friend to learning. But there was something that came home to him sharply, in this fellow who had to give over study till his shirt

was washed, and the scores of others who had never an opportunity at all. *If one of these could take his place*, he thought; and the thought tore away a bandage from his eyes. He was eaten by the shame of his discoveries, and despised himself as an unworthy favourite and a creature of the back-stairs of Fortune. He could no longer see without confusion one of these brave young fellows battling up-hill against adversity. Had he not filched that fellow's birthright? At best was he not coldly profiting by the injustice of society, and greedily devouring stolen goods? The money, indeed, belonged to his father, who had worked, and thought, and given up his liberty to earn it; but by what justice could the money belong to my friend, who had, as yet, done nothing but help to squander it? A more sturdy honesty, joined to a more even and impartial temperament, would have drawn from these considerations a new force of industry, that this equivocal position might be brought as swiftly as possible to an end, and some good services to mankind justify the appropriation of expense. It was not so with my friend, who was only unsettled and discouraged, and filled full of that trumpeting anger with which young men regard injustices in the first blush of youth; although in a few years they will tamely acquiesce in their existence, and knowingly profit by their complications. Yet all this while he suffered many indignant pangs. And once, when he put on his boots, like any other unripe donkey, to run away from home, it was his best consolation that he was now, at a single plunge, to free himself from the responsibility of this wealth that was not his, and to battle equally against his fellows in the warfare of life.

Some time after this, falling into ill-health, he was sent at great expense to a more favourable climate;

and then I think his perplexities were thickest. When he thought of all the other young men of singular promise, upright, good, the prop of families, who must remain at home to die, and with all their possibilities be lost to life and mankind ; and how he, by one more unmerited favour, was chosen out from all these others to survive ; he felt as if there were no life, no labour, no devotion of soul and body, that could repay and justify these partialities. A religious lady, to whom he communicated these reflections, could see no force in them whatever. "It was God's will," said she. But he knew it was by God's will that Joan of Arc was burnt at Rouen, which cleared neither Bedford nor Bishop Cauchon ; and again, by God's will that Christ was crucified outside Jerusalem, which excused neither the rancour of the priests nor the timidity of Pilate. He knew, moreover, that although the possibility of this favour he was now enjoying issued from his circumstances, its acceptance was the act of his own will ; and he had accepted it greedily, longing for rest and sunshine. And hence this allegation of God's providence did little to relieve his scruples. I promise you he had a very troubled mind. And I would not laugh if I were you, though while he was thus making mountains out of what you think mole-hills, he were still (as perhaps he was) contentedly practising many other things that to you seem black as hell. Every man is his own judge and mountain-guide through life. There is an old story of a mote and a beam, apparently not true, but worthy perhaps of some consideration. I should, if I were you, give some consideration to these scruples of his, and if I were he, I should do the like by yours ; for it is not unlikely that there may be something under both. In the meantime you must hear how my invalid acted.

Like many invalids, he supposed that he would die. Now should he die, he saw no means of repaying this huge loan which, by the hands of his father, mankind had advanced him for his sickness. In that case it would be lost money. So he determined that the advance should be as small as possible ; and, so long as he continued to doubt his recovery, lived in an upper room, and grudged himself all but necessaries. But so soon as he began to perceive a change for the better, he felt justified in spending more freely, to speed and brighten his return to health, and trusted in the future to lend a help to mankind, as mankind, out of its treasury, had lent a help to him.

I do not say but that my friend was a little too curious and partial in his view ; nor thought too much of himself and too little of his parents ; but I do say that here are some scruples which tormented my friend in his youth, and still, perhaps, at odd times give him a prick in the midst of his enjoyments, and which after all have some foundation in justice, and point, in their confused way, to some honourable honesty within the reach of man. And at least, is not this an unusual gloss upon the eighth commandment ? And what sort of comfort, guidance, or illumination did that precept afford my friend throughout these contentions ? “Thou shalt not steal.” With all my heart ! But *am* I stealing ?

The truly quaint materialism of our view of life disables us from pursuing any transaction to an end. You can make no one understand that his bargain is anything more than a bargain, whereas in point of fact it is a link in the policy of mankind, and either a good or an evil to the world. We have a sort of blindness which prevents us from seeing anything but sovereigns. If one man agrees to give another so many shillings

for so many hours' work, and then wilfully gives him a certain proportion of the price in bad money and only the remainder in good, we can see with half an eye that this man is a thief. But if the other spends a certain proportion of the hours in smoking a pipe of tobacco, and a certain other proportion in looking at the sky, or the clock, or trying to recall an air, or in meditation on his own past adventures, and only the remainder in downright work such as he is paid to do, is he, because the theft is one of time and not of money,—is he any the less a thief? The one gave a bad shilling, the other an imperfect hour; but both broke the bargain, and each is a thief. In piecework, which is what most of us do, the case is none the less plain for being even less material. If you forge a bad knife, you have wasted some of mankind's iron, and then, with unrivalled cynicism, you pocket some of mankind's money for your trouble. Is there any man so blind who cannot see that this is theft? Again, if you carelessly cultivate a farm, you have been playing fast and loose with mankind's resources against hunger; there will be less bread in consequence, and for lack of that bread somebody will die next winter: a grim consideration. And you must not hope to shuffle out of blame because you got less money for your less quantity of bread; for although a theft be partly punished, it is none the less a theft for that. You took the farm against competitors; there were others ready to shoulder the responsibility and be answerable for the tale of loaves; but it was you who took it. By the act you came under a tacit bargain with mankind to cultivate that farm with your best endeavour; you were under no superintendence, you were on parole; and you have broke your bargain, and to all who look closely, and yourself among the

rest if you have moral eyesight, you are 'a thief. Or take the case of men of letters. Every piece of work which is not as good as you can make it, which you have palmed off imperfect, meagrely thought, niggardly in execution, upon mankind who is your paymaster on parole and in a sense your pupil, every hasty or slovenly or untrue performance, should rise up against you in the court of your own heart and condemn you for a thief. Have you a salary? If you trifle with your health, and so render yourself less capable for duty, and still touch, and still greedily pocket the emolument—what are you but a thief? Have you double accounts? do you by any time-honoured juggle, deceit, or ambiguous process, gain more from those who deal with you than if you were bargaining and dealing face to face in front of God?—What are you but a thief? Lastly, if you fill an office, or produce an article, which, in your heart of hearts, you think a delusion and a fraud upon mankind, and still draw your salary and go through the sham manœuvres of this office, or still book your profits and keep on flooding the world with these injurious goods?—though you were old, and bald, and the first at church, and a baronet, what are you but a thief? These may seem hard words and mere curiosities of the intellect, in an age when the spirit of honesty is so sparingly cultivated that all business is conducted upon lies and so-called customs of the trade, that not a man bestows two thoughts on the utility or honourableness of his pursuit. I would say less if I thought less. But looking to my own reason and the right of things, I can only avow that I am a thief myself, and that I passionately suspect my neighbours of the same guilt.

Where did you hear that it was easy to be honest?

Do you find that in your Bible? Easy? It is easy to be an ass and follow the multitude like a blind, besotted bull in a stampede; and that, I am well aware, is what you and Mrs. Grundy mean by being honest. But it will not bear the stress of time nor the scrutiny of conscience. Even before the lowest of all tribunals,—before a court of law, whose business it is, not to keep men right, or within a thousand miles of right, but to withhold them from going so tragically wrong that they will pull down the whole jointed fabric of society by their misdeeds—even before a court of law, as we begin to see in these last days, our easy view of following at each other's tails, alike to good and evil, is beginning to be reproved and punished, and declared no honesty at all, but open theft and swindling; and simpletons who have gone on through life with a quiet conscience may learn suddenly, from the lips of a judge, that the custom of the trade may be a custom of the devil. You thought it was easy to be honest. Did you think it was easy to be just and kind and truthful? Did you think the whole duty of aspiring man was as simple as a hornpipe? and you could walk through life like a gentleman and a hero, with no more concern than it takes to go to church or to address a circular? And yet all this time you had the eighth commandment! and, what makes it richer, you would not have broken it for the world!

II

WE have spoken of that supreme self-dictation which keeps varying from hour to hour in its dictates with the variation of events and circumstances. Now, for us, that is ultimate. It may be founded on some

reasonable process, but it is not a process which we can follow or comprehend. And moreover the dictation is not continuous, or not continuous except in very lively and well-living natures ; and between whiles we must brush along without it. Practice is a more intricate and desperate business than the toughest theorising ; life is an affair of cavalry, where rapid judgment and prompt action are alone possible and right. As a matter of fact, there is no one so upright but he is influenced by the world's chatter ; and no one so headlong but he requires to consider consequences and to keep an eye on profit. For the soul adopts all affections and appetites without exception, and cares only to combine them for some common purpose which shall interest all. Now respect for the opinion of others, the study of consequences and the desire of power and comfort, are all undeniably factors in the nature of man ; and the more undeniably since we find that, in our current doctrines, they have swallowed up the others and are thought to conclude in themselves all the worthy parts of man. These, then, must also be suffered to affect conduct in the practical domain, much or little according as they are forcibly or feebly present to the mind of each.

Now a man's view of the universe is mostly a view of the civilised society in which he lives. Other men and women are so much more grossly and so much more intimately palpable to his perceptions, that they stand between him and all the rest ; they are larger to his eye than the sun, he hears them more plainly than thunder ; with them, by them, and for them, he must live and die. And hence the laws that affect his intercourse with his fellow-men, although merely customary and the creatures of a generation, are more clearly and continually before his mind than those

which bind him into the eternal system of things, support him in his upright progress on this whirling ball, or keep up the fire of his bodily life. And hence it is that money stands in the first rank of considerations and so powerfully affects the choice. For our society is built with money for mortar; money is present in every joint of circumstance; it might be named the social atmosphere, since, in society, it is by that alone that men continue to live, and only through that or chance that they can reach or affect one another. Money gives us food, shelter, and privacy; it permits us to be clean in person, opens for us the doors of the theatre, gains us books for study or pleasure, enables us to help the distresses of others, and puts us above necessity so that we can choose the best in life. If we love, it enables us to meet and live with the loved one, or even to prolong her health and life; if we have scruples, it gives us an opportunity to be honest; if we have any bright designs, here is what will smooth the way to their accomplishment. Penury is the worst slavery, and will soon lead to death.

But money is only a means; it presupposes a man to use it. The rich can go where he pleases, but perhaps please himself nowhere. He can buy a library or visit the whole world, but perhaps has neither patience to read nor intelligence to see. The table may be loaded and the appetite wanting; the purse may be full and the heart empty. He may have gained the world and lost himself; and with all his wealth around him, in a great house and spacious and beautiful demesne, he may live as blank a life as any tattered ditcher. Without an appetite, without an aspiration, void of appreciation, bankrupt of desire and hope, there, in his great house, let him sit and

look upon his fingers. It is perhaps a more fortunate destiny to have a taste for collecting shells than to be born a millionaire. Although neither is to be despised, it is always better policy to learn an interest than to make a thousand pounds ; for the money will soon be spent, or perhaps you may feel no joy in spending it ; but the interest remains imperishable and ever new. To become a botanist, a geologist, a social philosopher, an antiquary, or an artist, is to enlarge one's possessions in the universe by an incalculably higher degree, and by a far surer sort of property, than to purchase a farm of many acres. You had perhaps two thousand a year before the transaction ; perhaps you have two thousand five hundred after it. That represents your gain in the one case. But in the other, you have thrown down a barrier which concealed significance and beauty. The blind man has learned to see. The prisoner has opened up a window in his cell and beholds enchanting prospects ; he will never again be a prisoner as he was ; he can watch clouds and changing seasons, ships on the river, travellers on the road, and the stars at night ; happy prisoner ! his eyes have broken gaol ! And again he who has learned to love an art or science has wisely laid up riches against the day of riches ; if prosperity come, he will not enter poor into his inheritance ; he will not slumber and forget himself in the lap of money, or spend his hours in counting idle treasures, but be up and briskly doing ; he will have the true alchemic touch, which is not that of Midas, but which transmutes dead money into living delight and satisfaction. *Être et pas avoir*—to be, not to possess—that is the problem of life. To be wealthy, a rich nature is the first requisite and money but the second. To be of a quick and

healthy blood, to share in all honourable curiosities, to be rich in admiration and free from envy, to rejoice greatly in the good of others, to love with such generosity of heart that your love is still a dear possession in absence or unkindness—these are the gifts of fortune which money cannot buy and without which money can buy nothing. For what can a man possess, or what can he enjoy, except himself? If he enlarge his nature, it is then that he enlarges his estates. If his nature be happy and valiant, he will enjoy the universe as if it were his park and orchard.

But money is not only to be spent; it has also to be earned. It is not merely a convenience or a necessary in social life; but it is the coin in which mankind pays his wages to the individual man. And from this side, the question of money has a very different scope and application. For no man can be honest who does not work. Service for service. If the farmer buys corn, and the labourer ploughs and reaps, and the baker sweats in his hot bakery, plainly you who eat must do something in your turn. It is not enough to take off your hat, or to thank God upon your knees for the admirable constitution of society and your own convenient situation in its upper and more ornamental stories. Neither is it enough to buy the loaf with a sixpence; for then you are only changing the point of the inquiry; and you must first have *bought the sixpence*. Service for service: how have you bought your sixpences? A man of spirit desires certainty in a thing of such a nature; he must see to it that there is some reciprocity between him and mankind; that he pays his expenditure in service; that he has not a lion's share in profit and a drone's in labour; and is not a sleeping partner and mere

costly incubus on the great mercantile concern of mankind.

Services differ so widely with different gifts, and some are so inappreciable to external tests, that this is not only a matter for the private conscience, but one which even there must be leniently and trustfully considered. For remember how many serve mankind who do no more than meditate; and how many are precious to their friends for no more than a sweet and joyous temper. To perform the function of a man of letters it is not necessary to write; nay, it is perhaps better to be a living book. So long as we love we serve; so long as we are loved by others, I would almost say that we are indispensable; and no man is useless while he has a friend. The true services of life are inestimable in money, and are never paid. Kind words and caresses, high and wise thoughts, humane designs, tender behaviour to the weak and suffering, and all the charities of man's existence, are neither bought nor sold.

Yet the dearest and readiest, if not the most just, criterion of a man's services, is the wage that mankind pays him or, briefly, what he earns. There at least there can be no ambiguity. St. Paul is fully and freely entitled to his earnings as a tentmaker, and Socrates fully and freely entitled to his earnings as a sculptor, although the true business of each was not only something different, but something which remained unpaid. A man cannot forget that he is not superintended, and serves mankind on parole. He would like, when challenged by his own conscience, to reply: "I have done so much work, and no less, with my own hands and brain, and taken so much profit, and no more, for my own personal delight." And though St. Paul, if he had possessed

a private fortune, would probably have scorned to waste his time in making tents, yet of all sacrifices to public opinion none can be more easily pardoned than that by which a man, already spiritually useful to the world, should restrict the field of his chief usefulness to perform services more apparent, and possess a livelihood that neither stupidity nor malice could call in question. Like all sacrifices to public opinion and mere external decency, this would certainly be wrong; for the soul should rest contented with its own approval and indissuadably pursue its own calling. Yet, so grave and delicate is the question, that a man may well hesitate before he decides it for himself; he may well fear that he sets too high a valuation on his own endeavours after good; he may well condescend upon a humbler duty, where others than himself shall judge the service and proportion the wage.

And yet it is to this very responsibility that the rich are born. They can shuffle off the duty on no other; they are their own paymasters on parole; and must pay themselves fair wages and no more. For I suppose that in the course of ages, and through reform and civil war and invasion, mankind was pursuing some other and more general design than to set one or two Englishmen of the nineteenth century beyond the reach of needs and duties. Society was scarce put together, and defended with so much eloquence and blood, for the convenience of two or three millionaires and a few hundred other persons of wealth and position. It is plain that if mankind thus acted and suffered during all these generations, they hoped some benefit, some ease, some wellbeing, for themselves and their descendants; that if they supported law and order, it was to secure fair-play

for all ; that if they denied themselves in the present, they must have had some designs upon the future. Now a great hereditary fortune is a miracle of man's wisdom and mankind's forbearance ; it has not only been amassed and handed down, it has been suffered to be amassed and handed down ; and surely in such a consideration as this, its possessor should find only a new spur to activity and honour, that with all this power of service he should not prove unserviceable, and that this mass of treasure should return in benefits upon the race. If he had twenty, or thirty, or a hundred thousand at his banker's, or if all Yorkshire or all California were his to manage or to sell, he would still be morally penniless, and have the world to begin like Whittington, until he had found some way of serving mankind. His wage is physically in his own hand ; but, in honour, that wage must still be earned. He is only steward on parole of what is called his fortune. He must honourably perform his stewardship. He must estimate his own services and allow himself a salary in proportion, for that will be one among his functions. And while he will then be free to spend that salary, great or little, on his own private pleasures, the rest of his fortune he but holds and disposes under trust for mankind ; it is not his, because he has not earned it ; it cannot be his, because his services have already been paid ; but year by year it is his to distribute, whether to help individuals whose birthright and outfit have been swallowed up in his, or to further public works and institutions.

At this rate, short of inspiration, it seems hardly possible to be both rich and honest ; and the millionaire is under a far more continuous temptation to thief than the labourer who gets his shilling daily

for despicable toils. Are you surprised? It is even so. And you repeat it every Sunday in your churches. "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." I have heard this and similar texts ingeniously explained away and brushed from the path of the aspiring Christian by the tender Greatheart of the parish. One excellent clergyman told us that the "eye of a needle" meant a low, Oriental postern through which camels could not pass till they were unloaded—which is very likely just; and then went on, bravely confounding the "kingdom of God" with heaven, the future paradise, to show that of course no rich person could expect to carry his riches beyond the grave—which, of course, he could not and never did. Various greedy sinners of the congregations drank in the comfortable doctrine with relief. It was worth the while having come to church that Sunday morning! All was plain. The Bible, as usual, meant nothing in particular; it was merely an obscure and figurative school-copybook; and if a man were only respectable, he was a man after God's own heart.

Alas! I fear not. And though this matter of a man's services is one for his own conscience, there are some cases in which it is difficult to restrain the mind from judging. Thus I shall be very easily persuaded that a man has earned his daily bread; and if he has but a friend or two to whom his company is delightful at heart, I am more than persuaded at once. But it will be very hard to persuade me that any one has earned an income of a hundred thousand. What he is to his friends, he still would be if he were made penniless to-morrow; for as to the courtiers of luxury and power, I will neither consider them friends, nor indeed consider them at all. What he does for

mankind there are most likely hundreds who would do the same, as effectually for the race and as pleasantly to themselves, for the merest fraction of this monstrous wage. Why it is paid, I am, therefore, unable to conceive, and as the man pays it himself, out of funds in his detention, I have a certain backwardness to think him honest.

At least, we have gained a very obvious point : that *what a man spends upon himself he shall have earned by services to the race*. Thence flows a principle for the outset of life, which is a little different from that taught in the present day. I am addressing the middle and the upper classes ; those who have already been fostered and prepared for life at some expense ; those who have some choice before them, and can pick professions ; and above all, those who are what is called independent, and need do nothing unless pushed by honour or ambition. In this particular the poor are happy ; among them, when a lad comes to his strength, he must take the work that offers, and can take it with an easy conscience. But in the richer classes the question is complicated by the number of opportunities and a variety of considerations. Here, then, this principle of ours comes in helpfully. The young man has to seek, not a road to wealth, but an opportunity of service ; not money, but honest work. If he has some strong propensity, some calling of nature, some over-weening interest in any special field of industry, inquiry, or art, he will do right to obey the impulse ; and that for two reasons : the first external, because there he will render the best services ; the second personal, because a demand of his own nature is to him without appeal whenever it can be satisfied with the consent of his other faculties and appetites. If he has no

such elective taste, by the very principle on which he chooses any pursuit at all he must choose the most honest and serviceable, and not the most highly remunerated. We have here an external problem, not from or to ourself, but flowing from the constitution of society ; and we have our own soul with its fixed design of righteousness. All that can be done is to present the problem in proper terms, and leave it to the soul of the individual. Now the problem to the poor is one of necessity : to earn wherewithal to live, they must find remunerative labour. But the problem to the rich is one of honour : having the wherewithal, they must find serviceable labour. Each has to earn his daily bread : the one, because he has not yet got it to eat ; the other, who has already eaten it, because he has not yet earned it.

Of course, what is true of bread is true of luxuries and comforts, whether for the body or the mind. But the consideration of luxuries leads us to a new aspect of the whole question, and to a second proposition no less true, and maybe no less startling, than the last.

At the present day, we, of the easier classes, are in a state of surfeit and disgrace after meat. Plethora has filled us with indifference ; and we are covered from head to foot with the callosities of habitual opulence. Born into what is called a certain rank, we live, as the saying is, up to our station. We squander without enjoyment, because our fathers squandered. We eat of the best, not from delicacy, but from brazen habit. We do not keenly enjoy or eagerly desire the presence of a luxury ; we are unaccustomed to its absence. And not only do we squander money from habit, but still more pitifully

waste it in ostentation. I can think of no more melancholy disgrace for a creature who professes either reason or pleasure for his guide, than to spend the smallest fraction of his income upon that which he does not desire ; and to keep a carriage in which you do not wish to drive, or a butler of whom you are afraid, is a pathetic kind of folly. Money, being a means of happiness, should make both parties happy when it changes hands ; rightly disposed, it should be twice blessed in its employment ; and buyer and seller should alike have their twenty shillings' worth of profit out of every pound. Benjamin Franklin went through life an altered man, because he once paid too dearly for a penny whistle. My concern springs usually from a deeper source, to wit, from having bought a whistle when I did not want one. I find I regret this, or would regret it if I gave myself the time, not only on personal but on moral and philanthropical considerations. For, first, in a world where money is wanting to buy books for eager students and food and medicine for pining children, and where a large majority are starved in their most immediate desires, it is surely base, stupid, and cruel to squander money when I am pushed by no appetite and enjoy no return of genuine satisfaction. My philanthropy is wide enough in scope to include myself ; and when I have made myself happy, I have at least one good argument that I have acted rightly ; but where that is not so, and I have bought and not enjoyed, my mouth is closed, and I conceive that I have robbed the poor. And, second, anything I buy or use which I do not sincerely want or cannot vividly enjoy, disturbs the balance of supply and demand, and contributes to remove industrious hands from the production of what is useful or pleasurable and to keep them busy

upon ropes of sand and things that are a weariness to the flesh. That extravagance is truly sinful, and a very silly sin to boot, in which we impoverish mankind and ourselves. It is another question for each man's heart. He knows if he can enjoy what he buys and uses ; if he cannot, he is a dog in the manger ; nay, if he cannot, I contend he is a thief, for nothing really belongs to a man which he cannot use. Proprietor is connected with propriety ; and that only is the man's which is proper to his wants and faculties.

A youth, in choosing a career, must not be alarmed by poverty. Want is a sore thing, but poverty does not imply want. It remains to be seen whether with half his present income, or a third, he cannot, in the most generous sense, live as fully as at present. He is a fool who objects to luxuries ; but he is also a fool who does not protest against the waste of luxuries on those who do not desire and cannot enjoy them. It remains to be seen, by each man who would live a true life to himself and not a merely specious life to society, how many luxuries he truly wants and to how many he merely submits as to a social propriety ; and all these last he will immediately forswear. Let him do this, and he will be surprised to find how little money it requires to keep him in complete contentment and activity of mind and senses. Life at any level among the easy classes is conceived upon a principle of rivalry, where each man and each household must ape the tastes and emulate the display of others. One is delicate in eating, another in wine, a third in furniture or works of art or dress ; and I, who care nothing for any of these refinements, who am perhaps a plain athletic creature and love exercise, beef, beer, flannel shirts and a camp bed, am yet called upon to assimilate all these other tastes and make

these foreign occasions of expenditure my own. It may be cynical : I am sure I shall be told it is selfish ; but I will spend my money as I please and for my own intimate personal gratification, and should count myself a nincompoop indeed to lay out the colour of a halfpenny on any fancied social decency or duty. I shall not wear gloves unless my hands are cold, or unless I am born with a delight in them. Dress is my own affair, and that of one other in the world ; that, in fact and for an obvious reason, of any woman who shall chance to be in love with me. I shall lodge where I have a mind. If I do not ask society to live with me, they must be silent ; and even if I do, they have no further right but to refuse the invitation.

XIV

A CHRISTMAS SERMON

By the time this paper appears, I shall have been talking for twelve months ;¹ and it is thought I should take my leave in a formal and seasonable manner. Valedictory eloquence is rare, and death-bed sayings have not often hit the mark of the occasion. Charles Second, wit and sceptic, a man whose life had been one long lesson in human incredulity, an easy-going comrade, a manœuvring king—remembered and embodied all his wit and scepticism along with more than his usual good humour in the famous “ I am afraid, gentlemen. I am an unconscionable time a-dying.”

¹ i.e. in the pages of *Scribner's Magazine* (1888).

I

An unconscionable time a-dying—there is the picture (“I am afraid, gentlemen,”) of your life and of mine. The sands run out, and the hours are “numbered and imputed,” and the days go by; and when the last of these finds us, we have been a long time dying, and what else? The very length is something, if we reach that hour of separation undishonoured; and to have lived at all is doubtless (in the soldierly expression) to have served. There is a tale in Tacitus of how the veterans mutinied in the German wilderness; of how they mobbed Germanicus, clamouring to go home; and of how, seizing their general’s hand, these old, war-worn exiles passed his finger along their toothless gums. *Sunt lacrymæ rerum*: this was the most eloquent of the songs of Simeon. And when a man has lived to a fair age, he bears his marks of service. He may have never been remarked upon the breach at the head of the army; at least he shall have lost his teeth on the camp bread.

The idealism of serious people in this age of ours is of a noble character. It never seems to them that they have served enough; they have a fine impatience of their virtues. It were perhaps more modest to be singly thankful that we are no worse. It is not only our enemies, those desperate characters—it is we ourselves who know not what we do;—thence springs the glimmering hope that perhaps we do better than we think: that to scramble through this random business with hands reasonably clean, to have played the part of a man or woman with some reasonable fulness, to have often resisted the diabolic, and at the end to be still resisting it, is for the poor human soldier

to have done right well. To ask to see some fruit of our endeavour is but a transcendental way of serving for reward ; and what we take to be contempt of self is only greed of hire.

And again if we require so much of ourselves, shall we not require much of others ? If we do not genially judge our own deficiencies, is it not to be feared we shall be even stern to the trespasses of others ? And he who (looking back upon his own life) can see no more than that he has been unconscionably long a-dying, will he not be tempted to think his neighbour unconscionably long of getting hanged ? It is probable that nearly all who think of conduct at all, think of it too much ; it is certain we all think too much of sin. We are not damned for doing wrong, but for not doing right ; Christ would never hear of negative morality ; *thou shalt* was ever His word, with which He superseded *thou shalt not*. To make our idea of morality centre on forbidden acts is to defile the imagination and to introduce into our judgments of our fellow-men a secret element of gusto. If a thing is wrong for us, we should not dwell upon the thought of it ; or we shall soon dwell upon it with inverted pleasure. If we cannot drive it from our minds—one thing of two : either our creed is in the wrong and we must more indulgently remodel it ; or else, if our morality be in the right, we are criminal lunatics and should place our persons in restraint. A mark of such unwholesomely divided minds is the passion for interference with others : the Fox without the Tail was of this breed, but had (if his biographer is to be trusted) certain antique civility now out of date. A man may have a flaw, —a weakness, that unfits him for the duties of life, that spoils his temper, that threatens his integrity, or that betrays him into

cruelty. ' It has to be conquered ; but it must never be suffered to engross his thoughts. The true duties lie all upon the further side, and must be attended to with a whole mind so soon as this preliminary clearing of the decks has been effected. In order that he may be kind and honest, it may be needful he should become a total abstainer ; let him become so then, and the next day let him forget the circumstance. Trying to be kind and honest will require all his thoughts ; a mortified appetite is never a wise companion ; in so far as he has had to mortify an appetite, he will still be the worse man ; and of such an one a great deal of cheerfulness will be required in judging life, and a great deal of humility in judging others.

It may be argued again that dissatisfaction with our life's endeavour springs in some degree from dulness. We require higher tasks, because we do not recognise the height of those we have. Trying to be kind and honest seems an affair too simple and too inconsequential for gentlemen of our heroic mould ; we had rather set ourselves to something bold, arduous, and conclusive ; we had rather found a schism or suppress a heresy, cut off a hand or mortify an appetite. But the task before us, which is to co-endure with our existence, is rather one of microscopic fineness, and the heroism required is that of patience. There is no cutting of the Gordian knots of life ; each must be smilingly unravelled.

To be honest, to be kind—to earn a little and to spend a little less, to make upon the whole a family happier for his presence, to renounce when that shall be necessary and not be embittered, to keep a few friends, but these without capitulation—above all, on the same grim condition, to keep friends with

himself—here is a task for all that a man has of fortitude and delicacy. He has an ambitious soul who would ask more ; he has a hopeful spirit who should look in such an enterprise to be successful. There is indeed one element in human destiny that not blindness itself can controvert : whatever else we are intended to do, we are not intended to succeed ; failure is the fate allotted. It is so in every art and study ; it is so above all in the continent art of living well. Here is a pleasant thought for the year's end or for the end of life : Only self-deception will be satisfied, and there need be no despair for the despairer.

II

But Christmas is not only the mile-mark of another year, moving us to thoughts of self-examination : it is a season, from all its associations, whether domestic or religious, suggesting thoughts of joy. A man dissatisfied with his endeavours is a man tempted to sadness. And in the midst of the winter, when his life runs lowest and he is reminded of the empty chairs of his beloved, it is well he should be condemned to this fashion of the smiling face. Noble disappointment, noble self-denial, are not to be admired, not even to be pardoned, if they bring bitterness. It is one thing to enter the kingdom of heaven maim ; another to maim yourself and stay without. And the kingdom of heaven is of the childlike, of those who are easy to please, who love and who give pleasure. Mighty men of their hands, the smiters and the builders and the judges, have lived long and done sternly and yet preserved this lovely character ; and among our carpet interests and twopenny concerns, the shame

were indelible if *we* should lose it. Gentleness and cheerfulness, these come before all morality; they are the perfect duties. And it is the trouble with moral men that they have neither one nor other. It was the moral man, the Pharisee, whom Christ could not away with. If your morals make you dreary, depend upon it they are wrong. I do not say "give them up," for they may be all you have; but conceal them like a vice, lest they should spoil the lives of better and simpler people.

A strange temptation attends upon man: to keep his eye on pleasures, even when he will not share in them; to aim all his morals against them. This very year a lady (singular iconoclast!) proclaimed a crusade against dolls; and the racy sermon against lust is a feature of the age. I venture to call such moralists insincere. At any excess or perversion of a natural appetite, their lyre sounds of itself with relishing denunciations; but for all displays of the truly diabolic—envy, malice, the mean lie, the mean silence, the calumnious truth, the backbiter, the petty tyrant, the peevish poisoner of family life—their standard is quite different. These are wrong, they will admit, yet somehow not so wrong; there is no zeal in their assault on them, no secret element of gusto warms up the sermon; it is for things not wrong in themselves that they reserve the choicest of their indignation. A man may naturally disclaim all moral kinship with the Reverend Mr. Zola or the hobgoblin old lady of the dolls; for these are gross and naked instances. And yet in each of us some similar element resides. The sight of a pleasure in which we cannot or else will not share moves us to a particular impatience. It may be because we are envious, or because we are sad, or because we dislike noise and

romping—being so refined, or because—being so philosophic—we have an overweighing sense of life's gravity : at least, as we go on in years, we are all tempted to frown upon our neighbour's pleasures. People are nowadays so fond of resisting temptations ; here is one to be resisted. They are fond of self-denial ; here is a propensity that cannot be too peremptorily denied. There is an idea abroad among moral people that they should make their neighbours good. One person I have to make good : myself. But my duty to my neighbour is much more nearly expressed by saying that I have to make him happy—if I may.

III

Happiness and goodness, according to canting moralists, stand in the relation of effect and cause. There was never anything less proved or less probable : our happiness is never in our own hands ; we inherit our constitution ; we stand buffet among friend and enemies ; we may be so built as to feel a sneer or an aspersion with unusual keenness, and so circumstanced as to be unusually exposed to them ; we may have nerves very sensitive to pain, and be afflicted with a disease very painful. Virtue will not help us, and it is not meant to help us. It is not even its own reward, except for the self-centred and—I had almost said—the unamiable. No man can pacify his conscience ; if quiet be what he want, he shall do better to let that organ perish from disuse. And to avoid the penalties of the law, and the minor *capitis diminutio* of social ostracism, is an affair of wisdom—of cunning, if you will—and not of virtue.

In his own life, then, a man is not to expect

happiness, only to profit by it gladly when it shall arise ; he is on duty here ; he knows not how or why, and does not need to know ; he knows not for what hire, and must not ask. Somehow or other, though he does not know what goodness is, he must try to be good ; somehow or other, though he cannot tell what will do it, he must try to give happiness to others. And no doubt there comes in here a frequent clash of duties. How far is he to make his neighbour happy ? How far must he respect that smiling face, so easy to cloud, so hard to brighten again ? And how far, on the other side, is he bound to be his brother's keeper and the prophet of his own morality ? How far must he resent evil ?

The difficulty is that we have little guidance ; Christ's sayings on the point being hard to reconcile with each other, and (the most of them) hard to accept. But the truth of His teaching would seem to be this : in our own person and fortune, we should be ready to accept and to pardon all ; it is *our* cheek we are to turn, *our* coat that we are to give away to the man who has taken *our* cloak. But when another's face is buffeted, perhaps a little of the lion will become us best. That we are to suffer others to be injured, and stand by, is not conceivable, and surely not desirable. Revenge, says Bacon, is a kind of wild justice ; its judgments at least are delivered by an insane judge ; and in our own quarrel we can see nothing truly and do nothing wisely. But in the quarrel of our neighbour, let us be more bold. One person's happiness is as sacred as another's ; when we cannot defend both, let us defend one with a stout heart. It is only in so far as we are doing this, that we have any right to interfere : the defence of B is our only ground of action against A. A has as good

a right to go to the devil as we to go to glory ; and neither knows what he does.

The truth is that all these interventions and denunciations and militant mongerings of moral half-truths, though they be sometimes needful, though they are often enjoyable, do yet belong to an inferior grade of duties. Ill-temper and envy and revenge find here an arsenal of pious disguises ; this is the playground of inverted lusts. With a little more patience and a little less temper, a gentler and wiser method might be found in almost every case ; and the knot that we cut by some fine heady quarrel-scene in private life, or, in public affairs, by some denunciatory act against what we are pleased to call our neighbour's vices, might yet have been unwoven by the hand of sympathy.

IV

To look back upon the past year, and see how little we have striven, and to what small purpose ; and how often we have been cowardly and hung back, or temerarious and rushed unwisely in ; and how every day and all day long we have transgressed the law of kindness ;—it may seem a paradox, but in the bitterness of these discoveries a certain consolation resides. Life is not designed to minister to a man's vanity. He goes upon his long business most of the time with a hanging head, and all the time like a blind child. Full of rewards and pleasures as it is—so that to see the day break or the moon rise, or to meet a friend, or to hear the dinner-call when he is hungry, fills him with surprising joys—this world is yet for him no abiding city. Friendships fall through, health fails,

weariness assails him; year after year he must thumb the hardly varying record of his own weakness and folly. It is a friendly process of detachment. When the time comes that he should go, there need be few illusions left about himself. *Here lies one who meant well, tried a little, failed much*:—surely that may be his epitaph, of which he need not be ashamed. Nor will he complain at the summons which calls a defeated soldier from the field: defeated, ay, if he were Paul or Marcus Aurelius!—but if there is still one inch of fight in his old spirit, undishonoured. The faith which sustained him in his lifelong blindness and lifelong disappointment will scarce even be required in this last formality of laying down his arms. Give him a march with his old bones; there, out of the glorious sun-coloured earth, out of the day and the dust and the ecstasy—there goes another Faithful Failure!

From a recent book of verse, where there is more than one such beautiful and manly poem, I take this memorial piece: it says better than I can, what I love to think; let it be our parting word:—

“ A late lark twitters from the quiet skies ;
And from the west,
Where the sun, his day's work ended,
Lingers as in content,
There falls on the old, grey city
An influence luminous and serene,
A shining peace.

“ The smoke ascends
In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires
Shine, and are changed. In the valley
Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The sun,
Closing his benediction,
Sinks, and the darkening air
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night—
Night, with her train of stars
And her great gift of sleep.

"So be my passing !
My task accomplished and the long day done,
My wages taken, and in my heart
Some late lark singing,
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,
The sundown splendid and serene,
Death."¹

¹ From "A Book of Verses," by William Ernest Henley. D. Nutt, 1888.

NOTES

A NIGHT AMONG THE PINES

This is a chapter taken from "Travels with a Donkey," published in 1879. Stevenson himself selected this particular chapter as one of the best in the book, and says that there is "some stuff in it in the way of writing."

In September, 1876, Stevenson made a solitary journey in the mountainous region of the Cevennes, a district lying about midway between the River Rhone and the Pyrenees in the south of France. "A traveller of my sort," he tells us, "was a thing hitherto unheard of in that district." The peasants could not believe that any one would travel for the pleasure of wandering; Stevenson, therefore, pretended to be a pedlar, or seller of trifling wares. He did not wish to stay in villages or inns; so he had a sleeping-sack made. "This child of my invention was nearly six feet square. . . . I could bury myself in it up to the neck; for my head I trusted to a fur cap with a hood to fold down over my ears." It was too heavy for him to carry; so he bought a donkey, "a diminutive she-ass, not much bigger than a dog, the colour of a mouse, with a kindly eye and a determined under-jaw," to which he gave the name of Modestine. In this way he travelled about for eleven days enjoying the open air and strange country. Afterwards he wrote this account of his journey, taking as a model for the style of the book the "Sentimental Journey" of Laurence Sterne (published 1768).

Page 1, l. 3. **drove-road**, a rough track used by droves, or herds, of cattle.

Page 1, l. 12. **nymph**. The Greeks believed in a race of beings half-divine and half-human which lived in the woods and wild places. Nymphs were such semi-divine female dwellers in the woods; fauns were similar male inhabitants of the forest who had horns and feet like goats. The Romans called "Faunus" the god of the woods, and identified him with the Greek god of nature, Pan.

The quotation is from "Paradise Lost," IV. 705, where Milton is describing the bower of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden.

Page 2, l. 7. **temporal death**. Cf. Samuel Daniel:

"Care-charmer Sleep, son of the sable Night,
Brother to Death, in silent darkness born."

Page 2, l. 14. **sleeping hemisphere**. In the other hemisphere, the antipodes, it is day.

Page 2, l. 21. **fowls**, i.e. birds. Cf. "fowls of the air."

Page 2, l. 28. **arcana**, secrets; literally "shut up in a chest or box."

Page 2, l. 34. **Montaigne.** Michel, Lord of Montaigne, near Bordeaux, Western France, was born in 1533 and died in 1592. All his life he aimed at the cultivation of the best in himself, and the tranquil enjoyment of life. He summed up his philosophy of life in a series of essays, published 1580 and 1588. He was the inventor of the essay as a literary form. Bacon followed his style, and all the English essayists owe much to him. The best English translation of the "Essays" is that of Florio, published 1603.

Page 3, l. 4. **Bastille,** a famous fortress in Paris where political prisoners were confined. It was destroyed at the commencement of the French Revolution, by the mob. A good account of this incident may be read in Dickens' "Tale of Two Cities."

Page 3, l. 33. **The inn at Chasserades, etc.** On a previous night Stevenson had stayed at the inn in the village of Chasserades. He had to share a room with five other people, and when he woke up in the morning, "the room was full of a transparent darkness, which dimly showed me the other three beds and the five different nightcaps on the pillows."

He thinks how learned men (clerks) and students sit up reading through the night in stuffy rooms, and how others spend the evening at theatres to return to their hot rooms which have been locked up in their absence and are opened with a latch-key.

Page 4, l. 12. **I wished a companion.** Stevenson had lately met and fallen in love with the lady whom he was afterwards to marry. All through this journey he was thinking of her.

Page 4, l. 28. **the sound of his voice, etc.** Cf. Wordsworth. "The Reaper":

"O listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound."

Page 5, l. 10. **stronger companions, i.e. the stars of greater magnitude.**

Page 5, l. 30. **water-chocolate, i.e. boiled in water instead of milk, with which it is usually mixed.**

Page 6, l. 11. **my green caravanserai.** Cf. the fragment of a poem by Stevenson at the beginning of a previous chapter:

"The bed was made, the room was fit,
By punctual eve the stars were lit;
The air was still, the water ran;
No need there was for maid or man,
When we put up, my ass and I,
At God's green caravanserai."

Cf. also "in the fields, where God keeps an open house."

AN APOLOGY FOR IDLERS

This essay was first published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, February, 1877. It was afterwards included in the volume of essays "Virginibus Puerisque," published 1881.

For the spirit of the essay we may compare the poem of Wordsworth, "Expostulation and Reply":

"Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?

—Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,
Conversing as I may,
I sit upon this old grey stone,
And dream my time away."

The opening quotation is from Boswell's "Life of Johnson."

Page 6, l. 29. *lèse-respectability*. A parody of the term "*lèse-majesté*" or treason. "*Lèse*" is the French translation of the Latin "*laesa*" = "injured." Stevenson means that any one who does not follow one of the recognized professions is considered hardly respectable by those who do. The word "*Bohemian*" is sometimes applied to these apparent idlers, who refuse to conform to convention.

Page 7, l. 4. *bravado*, a show of courage as distinguished from real courage.

Page 7, l. 4. *gasconade*, boasting. The natives of Gascony (S.W. France) had the reputation of being boasters.

Page 7, l. 14. *Americanism*, i.e. a phrase used in the United States. Americans are sometimes more emphatic or free in their use of English than the English themselves are.

Page 7, l. 19. *Alexander*. This is a reference to the story that Alexander once paid a visit to Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher who lived in a tub. He asked haughtily what gift he would like. Diogenes simply requested him to stand aside as he was obstructing the sunlight!

Page 7, l. 22. *barbarians*. This refers to the sack of Rome by the Gauls in 390 B.C. When the Gauls entered the Senate house they found the Senators still sitting there grave and calm. For a time they were quiet in wonder, but at last, enraged, they slew them all.

Page 7, l. 35. *sent to Coventry*. Coventry or "Convent town" is an old town in Warwickshire. The phrase means "to refuse to talk to a person or live with him." The origin of the phrase is obscure. It probably refers to the fact that in convents the rule of silence is observed. Another explanation has it that soldiers were so unpopular in Coventry that the townspeople would not speak to them.

Page 8, l. 8. *Montenegro*, one of the smaller Balkan states.

Page 8, l. 9. **Richmond**, a place near London, popular with Londoners for short excursions.

Page 8, l. 14. **shot in their locker**, i.e. they have exhausted their brains at school. The metaphor is from a warship which has exhausted its ammunition.

Page 8, l. 29. **Lady of Shalott**. See the poem of Tennyson with this title.

Page 9, l. 6. **Emphyteusis**. A term in Roman law for a kind of perpetual lease of land.

Page 9, l. 7. **Stillicide**. Another Roman law term. The right of draining water from the roof of a house over another property.

Stevenson read for the Bar in his student days, and during the years 1872-73 spent some months in a lawyer's office.

Page 9, l. 13. **Dickens and Balzac** both studied actual life and tried to represent it truly in their novels.

Page 9, l. 25. **Mr. Worldly Wiseman**. A character in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" (1678).

Page 10, l. 29. **scholastic categories**. Aristotle held that all things can be classified under certain heads; these heads he called "categories." He was followed by the "school-men," as the theological philosophers of mediæval Europe were called, but under them the classification became too arbitrary.

Page 10, l. 33. **workhouse**, or poor-house, where paupers are given shelter and food in return for certain work.

Page 11, l. 23. **stockish**, dull or slow to move.

Page 11, l. 32. **Book**, of life.

Page 11, l. 34. **Hebrew roots**, the roots of the Hebrew language.

Page 12, l. 13. **Belvedere**, a word of Italian origin used for a raised platform or building from which one can "see" the neighbouring country "well."

Page 12, l. 21. **doctors**, of learning, who dispute so much among themselves.

Page 13, l. 4. **random provocations**, to interest or thought.

Page 13, l. 11. **gold-mill**, i.e. the occupations which bring one money for one's labour.

Page 13, l. 18. **alienated**, out of their minds.

Page 13, l. 20. **deed**, a legal bond.

Page 13, l. 21. **turn of the market**. A term used on the Stock Exchange when some securities begin to appreciate and others to depreciate in value.

Page 14, l. 16. **walking gentlemen**. Some characters in a play have only to walk on the stage and not to speak at all.

Page 14, l. 28. **Colonel Newcome**, Fred Bayham, and Mr. Barnes are all characters in Thackeray. See "The Newcomes."

Page 14, l. 34. **Hazlitt** (1778-1830), the essayist whom Stevenson quotes in his essay, "Walking Tours."

Page 15, l. 1. **Northcote**, a painter (died 1831).

Page 15, l. 13. **like a compact**. It was superstitiously believed possible to make an agreement with the devil to sell him your soul for a life of pleasure on earth. Cf. the story of "Faust" in Marlowe and Goethe.

Page 15, l. 17. **quality of mercy.** Cf. Shakespeare, "Merchant of Venice," IV. 1 :

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd.
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath ; it is twice blest ;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes."

Page 16, l. 9. **forty-seventh proposition,** of Euclid.

Page 16, l. 31. **Circumlocution Office.** In his novel "Little Dorrit," Dickens ridicules the "red tape" and slow ways of government offices, and this is the name he gives to his government office.

Page 17, l. 12. **so careless of the single life.** Tennyson in his poem "In Memoriam," LV., says :

"Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams ?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life."

Page 17, l. 15. **Sir Thomas Lucy's preserves.** This refers to the tradition that Shakespeare when a youth at Stratford used to poach on the grounds of Sir Thomas Lucy at Charlecote Manor.

Page 17, l. 30. **Atlas,** the mythological upholder of the world upon his shoulders. The mountain in the north of Africa opposite Spain derives its name from this legend.

Page 18, l. 2. **Israelites.** The Hebrews when carried captive into Egypt were employed on various public works. The pyramids were, however, constructed before their time. "Pharaoh" was the Egyptian word for "king."

Page 18, l. 6. **Master of the Ceremonies** refers allegorically to the power which presides over human life.

Page 18, l. 7. **lukewarm bullet,** i.e. the world. The reference is to the theory that the earth is gradually cooling.

WALKING TOURS

This essay was published first in the *Cornhill Magazine*, June, 1876, and afterwards included in "Virginibus Puerisque." The essay of Hazlitt "On Going a Journey" will be found in his "Table Talk"; a cheap reprint is a volume in the "Everyman's Library."

Page 18, l. 22. **canting dilettantes.** A "dilettante" is a dabbler in any art, one who regards art as an amusement only. Such people often use stock phrases about art which they do not understand; hence the adjective "canting." It will be remembered that Ruskin wrote against the spoiling of scenery by railways.

Page 18, l. 24. **of the brotherhood.** The term is used properly of a brotherhood of monks, a religious order.

Page 19, l. 12. **curaçoa,** or more correctly "curaçao," a liqueur made from the peel of oranges. The name is taken from a small island in the Caribbean seas.

Page 19, l. 13. **brown John,** a large vessel. Stevenson probably is thinking of the "demi-john," a name derived from the French "dame-Jeanne," called after some forgotten person; just as in

England we have the "Uncle Toby jug," called after Uncle Toby in Sterne's novel, "Tristram Shandy." He uses the adjective "brown" probably because these bottles were often made of leather. A famous inn which Dickens mentions in "Pickwick Papers" is called "The Leather Bottle."

Page 20, l. 3. open to all impressions. Cf. "random provocations."

Page 20, l. 8. vegetate, i.e. grow unconsciously.

Page 20, l. 21. like Christian, the hero of the "Pilgrim's Progress," who for a long way on his journey has to carry a heavy pack (typifying the load of sin) but is later relieved of it (typifying emancipation from sin).

Page 20, l. 31. Abudah's chest. This refers to a tale, in Ridley's "Tales of the Genii," of a merchant who was haunted by an old hag until he obeyed God and reformed his ways.

Page 21, l. 3. a coat of darkness, i.e. a coat which renders one invisible.

Page 21, l. 7. at his loom, i.e. in the mind.

Page 21, l. 24. troubadour originally, a wandering singer or minstrel in the south of France in the eleventh century A.D. Then used jocularly of any singer.

Notice here that Stevenson uses "your" in the Elizabethan colloquial way. Cf. "Midsummer-Night's Dream," III. 1. "There is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living."

Page 21, l. 26. common tramp, a man who tramps about the country living on alms or theft and does no work.

Page 23, l. 8. barons of the mind, i.e. we find that we cannot think out any problem closely; the mental powers refuse to work. The metaphor is taken from the feudal system when, in time of war, the sovereign summoned his lords or barons to his standard and they brought with them all their retainers. On this condition they held their lands of the King.

Page 24, l. 14. fête, a French word for "festival." The use of this word shows that Stevenson is thinking of a village in France.

Page 24, l. 31. Milton. The quotation is from Milton's pamphlet "Areopagitica" (1644).

Page 25, l. 10. grog, spirits and water, usually taken hot.

Page 25, l. 18. nicest, i.e. most exact.

Page 25, l. 23. Héloïse. "Julie or The New Héloïse" (published 1760) is a novel by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), whose writings had such an influence on the men of the French Revolution and upon the poets of the Romantic Revival in England.

Page 25, l. 24. Llangollen, a picturesque little town in North Wales. Hazlitt refers to this incident in the essay quoted above.

Page 25, l. 29. Heine's songs. Heinrich Heine (1799-1856), a German poet. His lyrics are full of the joy of life.

Page 25, l. 30. Tristram Shandy, the novel of Laurence Sterne (1713-1768), the writer most nearly akin to Stevenson himself. This novel is full of digressions and one can read it "by fits and starts." It is therefore suitable for a walking tour.

Page 26, l. 10. provincial humours, i.e. the characteristics of country life as distinguished from those of the metropolis.

Page 26, l. 15. Burns. In his little poem, "The Rigs o'

Barley," Burns speaks of the joy of love as better than all others, though

"I hae been blythe wi' comrades dear ;
 I hae been merry drinkin' ;
 I hae been joyfu' gath'rin' gear ;
 I hae been happy thinkin'."

Page 26, l. 20. **flaming dial-plates**, i.e. illuminated clocks such as are seen on public buildings.

Page 26, l. 21. **castles in the fire**, i.e. imaginary schemes ; a variation of the phrase "castles in Spain."

Page 26, l. 22. **solid habitable mansions**, etc., a variation for "reality." A gravel soil is considered healthy for residence upon.

Page 26, l. 30. **gathering gear**, i.e. acquiring property and money.

Page 26, l. 31. **derisive silence**. Cf. Wordsworth, Ode on "Intimations of Immortality" :

"Our noisy years seem moments in the being
 Of the eternal Silence."

Page 27, l. 12. **social heresy**, i.e. revolt against the conventional opinion of society that one must always be busy about something.

Page 27, l. 12. **shuffling**, i.e. hiding the truth from ourselves by specious arguments.

Page 27, l. 16. **Philistines**. The people of Palestine who oppressed the Israelites. They are denounced as barbarians by the Hebrew poets. Matthew Arnold applied the term to those people of his own generation who were intolerant and narrow-minded and did not care for culture and art, the people who "go for" the sixpences, as Stevenson would say.

Page 27, l. 23. **reeking whitely**, i.e. he watches the white smoke curling up in the darkness.

Page 27, l. 25. **seventh circle**. A reference to the seven spheres of Heaven.

Page 27, l. 27. **weather-cock goes about**, i.e. your mood changes just as the weather-cock veers round when the wind shifts.

WILL O' THE MILL

This allegorical story was written in 1877, published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, January, 1878, and reprinted in a volume of stories, 1887, with "The Merry Men."

The scenery was taken, said Stevenson, partly from the Murgthal in Baden, and partly from the Brenner Pass in Tyrol, which he had visited as a boy of twelve.

Stevenson's own theory of life, as may be abundantly shown from his other writings, was that a man should possess the spirit of adventure, and be ever advancing to new experiments in action and thought ; should be alive to "random provocations" and

refuse no experience. "Not even God can forgive the hanger-back," he used to say. His philosophy was the philosophy of Browning rather than the philosophy of Wordsworth.

But in this allegory he shows us what may be urged on the opposite side. In "Will" we have a man who deliberately holds back, who is "prudent and quiet," who sets himself solely "to cultivate his garden." There is much of the spirit of Wordsworth in "Will."

Critics have seen the influence of Hawthorne on the style, but the manner is Stevenson's own. As a work of art the story is almost faultless, and may be recommended to the student as an example of vivid, yet restrained, writing.

Page 29, l. 11. *tumbril*, a big waggon.

Page 29, l. 26. *barouche*, a travelling-carriage.

Page 29, l. 27. *dicky*, a seat at the back of the carriage.

Page 30, l. 7. "*power*," used, like "a sight," colloquially by rustics for "a number of."

Page 31, l. 14. *stone men*, statues and carved piers of the bridge.

Page 31, l. 34. *tortured him*, etc., i.e. the road seemed calling to him to go down it and see all these wonderful things in the plains.

Page 32, l. 23. *eternal city*. The name given to Rome, which was the goal of most of the barbarian invasions of Italy. The old man in the legend uses the phrase allegorically. We have no abiding city on this earth.

Page 32, l. 29. *Icarus*, the son of Daedalus, the clever craftsman of Greek legend who made wings for flying. Icarus flew too near the sun, which melted them, so that he fell into the sea. The Icarian Sea is called after him.

Page 33, l. 27. *twilit*, formless pre-existence, the existence of the soul before birth in this world.

Cf. Sir Thomas Browne, "Hydriotaphia," V. "Pious spirits who passed their days in raptures of futurity, made little more of this world, than the world that was before it, while they lay obscure in the chaos of pre-ordination, and the night of their fore-beings."

Page 34, l. 18. *a mere symbol*, i.e. of the outside world which he could not reach.

Page 34, l. 26. *postmaster*, i.e. he furnished post-horses or relays of horses for travellers.

Page 35, l. 7. *publican*, the keeper of an inn or "public" house.

Page 35, l. 9. *Arcturus* or "guardian of the Bear," a star in the constellation Boötes.

Page 38, l. 10. *Aldebaran*, another conspicuous star, in the constellation Taurus.

Page 40, l. 9. *rule the roast*, i.e. be master. The master distributes the roast or meat; hence the metaphor.

Page 41, l. 28. *impression of mystic strangeness*. Cf. the opening stanza of Wordsworth's Ode on "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood."

Page 47, l. 30. *clean shrift*, i.e. a full confession of one's thoughts.

Page 49, l. 15. *tiff*, colloquial for "quarrel."

Page 53, l. 11. **made an epoch**, i.e. there was nothing else to record.

Page 54, l. 4. **cafes**, open restaurants where people drink "café," or coffee, and take refreshment.

Page 60, l. 5. **form**, hiding-place, where the hare lies during the day.

THE BATTLE OF SHOREBY

This story appeared first in serial form in *Young Folks* in 1883, under the title "The Black Arrow, a Tale of Tunstall Forest, by Captain George North." This was the name under which Stevenson had published his first story, "Treasure Island," in the same magazine, and the "Black Arrow" was designed to please the young readers who had not received the former story as well as might have been expected from its merits. Stevenson wrote the tale quickly and did not, in after years, care much for it, though it had a success in the magazine and has been often re-printed.

The scene is laid in Norfolk at the time of the Wars of the Roses between the rival houses of York and Lancaster. Stevenson derived much, as regards both material and style, from the collection of letters known as the Paston letters—letters written during the reigns of Henry VI., Edward IV., and Richard III., mostly by, or to, members of the Paston family in Norfolk.

The hero of the story is young Richard (Dick) Shelton, whose guardian is Sir Daniel Brackley. At the beginning of the story he finds out that this guardian murdered his father and is a great villain in every way. After exciting adventures he escapes from his house, and is sheltered by an outlaw named Lawless, who belongs to the "brotherhood of the Black Arrow," a band of desperate men who all owe Sir Daniel a grudge and have sworn to destroy him. Dick is captured by Sir Daniel, but escapes again owing to the kindness of Lord Risingham, whom he is able to convince of Sir Daniel's treachery to the Lancastrian party. The passage selected refers to the time just after this escape. Dick is on his way to the Cross of St. Bride beside the forest near Shoreby to meet Richard of Gloucester, the leader of the Yorkist party. His friend, Lord Foxham, was to have made this meeting, but he has been wounded and Dick goes in his place.

Page 62, l. 15. **To the arrow!** the rallying cry of the members of the brotherhood of the Black Arrow.

Page 64, l. 34. **handful of lances**, i.e. only a few men armed with lances.

Page 66, l. 4. **signet**, ring which Lord Foxham had given to Dick in order that the Duke might know him to be a trusty messenger.

Page 67, l. 14. **winning spurs**, gaining by valour the honour of knighthood.

Page 69, l. 25. **unlatched, unbraced**, i.e. their armour not adjusted for battle.

Page 72, l. 16. murrey and blue, the colours of Sir Daniel Brackley.

Page 72, l. 34. jack, jacket.

Page 75, l. 27. incontinently, at once.

Page 76, l. 3. gecked, jeered.

THE ISLET

Published as a serial story in *Young Folks*, 1886, and in book form the same year.

After his return from California in 1880 Stevenson interested himself for several years in the history of the Scottish Highlands. The adventures of the Jacobites particularly appealed to him, and in January, 1886, he began this romance which he called, "Kidnapped, being memoirs of the adventures of David Balfour in the year 1751, how he was kidnapped and cast away; his sufferings in a desert isle; his journey in the wild Highlands; his acquaintance with Alan Breck Stewart and other notorious Highland Jacobites; with all that he suffered at the hands of his uncle, Ebenezer Balfour of Shaws, falsely so-called: written by himself and now set forth by Robert Louis Stevenson." Writing of the story in a letter he says, "It is my own favourite of my works, not for craftsmanship, but for human niceness, in which I have been wanting hitherto." In the dedication he writes, "This is no furniture for the scholar's library, but a book for the winter evening school-room when the tasks are over, and the hour for bed draws near." David has been kidnapped by order of his wicked uncle, Ebenezer, who is living on the estate of Shaws which rightfully belongs to the orphan David. The sailing ship on which he has been carried away is wrecked off the west coast of Scotland where there are many islands. David manages to get hold of a spar, the spare yard of the ship, and with this to support him—for he cannot swim—struggles through the roost or tide race and reaches the small island of Earraid. At this point our selection begins.

Page 83, l. 15. hags, holes in swampy or boggy ground.

Page 86, l. 16. flight from Worcester, where he had been defeated in a battle by Cromwell, September 3, 1651.

Page 87, l. 4. Queensferry, where he had been kidnapped.

Page 88, l. 5. coble, small fishing boat.

Page 88, l. 12. Gaelic, the vernacular of the Highlands, the language of the Gael or Gauls, the old inhabitants of the Highlands.

Page 89, l. 1. Scots, the dialect of Southern Scotland. Stevenson wrote some of his poems in "Scots."

Page 90, l. 14. had no Gaelic, i.e. did not understand Gaelic.

Page 91, l. 9. bottom of the neaps. The neap tide is the tide after the moon's first and third quarters, when the high water level is at its lowest. At this time, therefore, the passage would be possible at any period in the twenty-four hours.

MARKHEIM

This story was written in 1884 and published in "The Broken Shaft," a Christmas annual, in the next year. It was republished with the "Merry Men" 1887. This story of a murder in the shop of a dealer in antiques and curiosities is a beautiful allegory. It shows how a man may be stained with every kind of sin and yet not be utterly lost so long as he does not identify himself with evil and can exclaim, like Markheim, "I have still my hatred of evil and from that I can draw both energy and courage." To look upon our own life with honest eyes and to see the evil in it as evil—that is the first step towards regeneration in goodness. The mysterious visitor who tempts Markheim at first appears to us to be the devil, but at the end is seen in reality to be his guardian angel, who, by temptation, has won him back to a true knowledge of himself and his high human destiny. Nowhere is the courage and life of Stevenson's ethical creed more powerfully displayed than in this dramatic story of Markheim, and nowhere is his style seen to better advantage.

Page 92, l. 3. **touch a dividend.** He has invested, as it were, in knowledge of antiques and curiosities, and reaps the interest on his investment when he is able to sell an article at more than its proper price.

Page 92, l. 6. **profit by my virtue,** because a man who has acquired something dishonestly will sell it to him, if no questions are asked, below its real value.

Page 97, l. 2. **Time was that,** etc. Cf. "Macbeth," III. 4. After Macbeth has seen the ghost of the murdered Banquo he says,

"the time has been,
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end; but now they rise again."

Page 97, l. 5. **instant, pressing.**

Page 103, l. 22. **had befallen Napoleon,** in his Russian campaign.

Page 104, l. 12. **Sheraton sideboard,** a famous maker and designer of furniture (1751–1806) whose work is now much prized.

Page 105, l. 6. **Jacobean tombs,** etc. He thinks of summer Sundays in the village church. Tombs dating back to the days of James I. and James II. The Ten Commandments (cf. Exodus xx., Bible) are often inscribed on the walls of the east end of the church.

Page 107, l. 7. **judge me by my acts.** Cf. Browning, "Rabbi Ben Ezra."

Page 109, l. 6. **All sins are murder.** Cf. Wilde, "Ballad of Reading Gaol":

"Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword."

Page 109, l. 13. ball, dance, to which she wishes to go against her mother's wishes.

Page 112, l. 3. revival meetings. From time to time there is a movement of revival in religion, and eloquent preachers hold meetings; a wave of emotion passes over the audience and sinners resolve to reform their lives.

Page 113, l. 6. dislimned, the outlines faded away.

A COLLEGE MAGAZINE

This article on Stevenson's student days was published for the first time in "Memories and Portraits," 1887.

When Stevenson was a student of the Edinburgh University he was elected (1869) to the most important of the University Clubs—the "Speculative Society." Soon with three others of its members he started the *Edinburgh University Magazine*, to which he refers at the end of this account of his attempts to learn how to write. The magazine was not successful and Stevenson tells us, "reviewing the whole episode, I told myself that the time was not yet ripe nor the man ready; and to work again I went with my penny version-books, having fallen back in one day from the printed author to the manuscript student."

Stevenson's contribution to the magazine, "An old Scots Gardener," is republished in "Memories and Portraits." Some other contributions of his are printed in the collection of his "Juvenilia."

This piece of autobiography is exceedingly interesting. We see what authors influenced him in style and learn his methods of acquiring proficiency in expression. We should read in connection with it the paper, "Books which influenced me."

Page 114, l. 18. often accompanied my walks. Cf. "Walking Tours," and the description of a walker "composing articles, delivering orations, and conducting the most impassioned interviews, by the way."

Page 115, l. 9. the sedulous ape, i.e. he studiously imitated. Most of these writers are familiar to students of English literature, and need no comment.

Page 115, l. 12. Baudelaire (1821–1867), a great French master of style.

Page 115, l. 12. Obermann. Senancour (1770–1846), another French author, wrote, under this name, a series of letters from his place of retirement on the lake of Geneva, "treating almost entirely of nature and of the human soul." Matthew Arnold has a poem on him.

Page 115, l. 22. pasticcio, a term used for a composition, musical or pictorial, as a rule, made up of various elements. Stevenson implies by the term that he worked into this article imitations of several passages of Sir Thomas Browne.

Page 115, l. 23. save the mark! an expression conveying an apology for making such a statement.

Page 115, l. 24. **Sordello.** A long poem by R. Browning (1840) describing the life of Sordello—"the incidents in the development of a soul." Most readers find it somewhat difficult to understand.

Page 115, l. 25. **took an eclectic middle course,** i.e. he borrowed something as regards style from each of these poets.

Page 115, l. 26. **Morris,** William Morris (1837-96), author of several romantic poems, and some very fine prose.

Page 115, l. 28. **gouty-footed,** i.e. awkward and halting.

Page 115, l. 31. **John Webster,** one of the dramatists who succeeded Shakespeare. His plays are full of horrible situations, e.g. "The Duchess of Malfi," 1623.

Page 115, l. 33. **Congreve,** the chief dramatist of the Restoration period. His prose is especially pure.

Page 116, l. 3. **Peebles,** a town in Scotland, south of Edinburgh.

Page 116, l. 3. **Book of Snobs,** a social satire by Thackeray.

Page 116, l. 7. **old Dumas** (1802-1870). Alexander Dumas, the elder, as distinguished from his son, also an author. His best-known work is the exciting novel, "The Three Musketeers."

Page 116, l. 8. **one strangely bettered by another hand.** This refers to "Deacon Brodie," which he recast later in collaboration with W. E. Henley.

Page 116, l. 14. **ventriloquial efforts.** As a ventriloquist imitates another's voice, so Stevenson wrote in the style of others.

Page 116, l. 29. **Cicero,** the Roman lawyer and orator (106 B.C.-46 B.C.). His essays on "Old Age," "Friendship," and "Duties," were the works of his which influenced Montaigne.

Page 116, l. 32. **prime force,** i.e. original force.

Page 116, l. 34. **the imperial.** So Carlyle calls Shakespeare "this King Shakespeare."

Page 117, l. 1. **a school,** i.e. the school of Elizabethan dramatists, of whom Marlowe was the "prime force." Shakespeare borrowed not only plots but language from his predecessors.

Page 117, l. 2. **lawless exceptions.** It has been observed that all the great writers break the ordinary rules for writing.

Page 117, l. 7. **scales,** mechanical musical exercises on the piano. Here applied to such laborious literary exercises as Stevenson practised.

Page 117, l. 26. **Padding,** a word applied by literary men to language which has no thought behind it.

Page 118, l. 1. **piece of good fortune.** The foundation of the *Edinburgh University Magazine*.

TALK AND TALKERS

I

Published first in the *Cornhill Magazine*, April, 1882. Republished in "Memories and Portraits," 1887.

Page 118, l. 15. **international congress,** i.e. the daily talk of men all over the world.

Page 118, l. 22. **Literature . . . the shadow of good talk,** e.g. essays.

Page 119, l. 2. preserve flies. Cf. Pope, "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot":

"Pretty! in amber to observe the forms
Of hairs or straws or dirt or grubs or worms,
The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,
But wonder how the devil they got there."

Page 119, l. 4. linsey-woolsey, coarse material of wool and cotton. The meaning is that we can talk of many subjects which we cannot conveniently write about.

Page 119, l. 7. freezing immunities of the pulpit. The preacher is immune from interruptions and has not the wholesome stimulus of opposition; his speech is apt, therefore, to become frigid and unreal.

Page 119, l. 11. contemporary groove, the fashions of the day in thought or expression.

Page 120, l. 11. Humours, etc., i.e. we must first get into the same mood. If one does not wish to talk and the other does, there will be no real accord of "humours"; or one may feel serious and the other gay, etc.

Page 120, l. 19. "kill," the technical term for landing a fish.

Page 121, l. 15. Kudos, a Greek word for "glory" or "reputation."

Page 121, l. 17. trailing clouds of glory. A quotation from Wordsworth's Ode on "Intimations of Immortality."

Page 121, l. 19. entr'acte, the interval between the acts of a play.

Page 121, l. 24. The Flying Dutchman, an opera by the German composer Wagner (1813-1883).

Page 122, l. 17. the very clothes, etc. Cf. "Hamlet," I. 3.

"For the apparel oft proclaims the man."

Page 122, l. 20. Theophrastus, a Greek philosopher, successor of Aristotle as leader of the Peripatetic school of philosophy. He died in 288 B.C. Among other works he wrote a book of characters describing the different types of men, e.g. the miser, the profligate, etc. He was much imitated by the essayists of the seventeenth century, e.g. Sir Thomas Overbury, who published his "Characters" in 1614.

Page 122, l. 34. Othello, taken as a type of the soldier, "covetous of honour."

Page 122, l. 34. Napoleon, a type of military glory and ambition.

Page 122, l. 35. Consuelo, the heroine of the novel of that name by the French woman writer, Aurore Dupin, who published under the pseudonym of "George Sand" (1804-1876).

Page 122, l. 35. Clarissa Harlowe, the best known novel of Samuel Richardson, published 1748.

Consuelo and Clarissa are both types of feminine purity sustained in spite of temptations and persecutions.

Page 122, l. 35. Vautrin, a convict of great cleverness and resource, the type of a clever rogue, who appears in the series of novels called the "Human Comedy," by the French writer Balzac (1799-1850).

Page 122, l. 35. **Steenie Steenson**, a character in Sir Walter Scott's short story, "Wandering Willie's Tale." He is a type of rustic simplicity mingled with cunning.

Page 123, l. 15. **weather**. As a commentary on this remark consider the dramatic effect of the storms in "King Lear," in "Julius Caesar," and in "Macbeth."

Page 123, l. 16. **nadir**, lowest point; the opposite of "zenith."

Page 124, l. 5. **Court of love**, such as were established in Provence in the time of the troubadours, in the Middle Ages, to decide affairs of the heart.

Page 124, l. 24. **cat's cradle**, a child's game played with two pieces of string.

II

Published first in the *Cornhill Magazine*, August, 1882. Republished in "Memories and Portraits," 1887.

Page 125, l. 8. **chimney-cornerers**, i.e. those who like to sit quietly by the fire and talk.

Page 125, l. 26. **the Old Man**, the "aboriginal man" in each of us.

Page 126, l. 14. **Valhalla**, the great hall of the heroes in the palace of the gods in Scandinavian mythology.

Page 126, l. 21. **make better intellectual blood**. Just as food when well digested makes blood in the body, so these corrections add to the intellectual growth of such people.

Page 126, l. 26. **the old school**, the manners and fashions of a past generation.

Page 128, l. 11. **like villainous roadside brandy**. Stevenson is thinking of some little roadside inn in France where he had stopped for refreshment and got but bad liquor.

Page 128, l. 18. **revenges of life**. Cf. "Twelfth Night," V. 1, "The whirligig of time brings in his revenges."

Page 128, l. 33. **detachment**, i.e. the aged seem to have done with life and can give us impartial advice about it.

Page 128, l. 35. **sensible**, i.e. apparent to the senses.

Page 129, l. 6. **by the ears**, i.e. quarrelling. Cf. Butler's "Hudibras" (1663):

"When hard words, jealousies and fears,
Set folk together by the ears."

THE MORALITY OF THE PROFESSION OF LETTERS.

Published in the *Fortnightly Review*, April, 1881. Republished in "Later Essays," 1895.

Page 129, l. 16. **a popular writer**, James Payn (1830-1898). He published over sixty novels.

Page 131, l. 17. **esurient bookmakers**, i.e. those who write books only in order to make money.

Page 132, l. 35. **temples**, i.e. of literature.

Page 132, l. 35. nine-days' curiosity, a wonder is supposed to engage attention for nine days. There is a proverb, "A wonder lasts nine days, and then the puppy's eyes are open."

Page 133, l. 14. in clearer air, i.e. of great literature. He calls this later "the antidote, in small volumes," to modern journalism.

Page 133, l. 16. Corinthian baseness. The licentiousness and luxury of Corinth was a proverb in the ancient world.

The American reporter is notorious for his lack of decent reticence and the vulgar view of life which he offers to his readers.

Page 133, l. 17. Parisian chroniqueur, the journalist of Paris who gives the public light gossip about the scandals of society.

Page 135, l. 15. educational suppressions, i.e. in educating their children parents often suppress facts which they do not think it well for the young to know.

Page 135, l. 22. *Candide*, a novel by the French cynic, Voltaire (1694-1778). It is an attack on optimism.

Page 135, l. 25. nice, subtle.

Page 136, l. 23. has an office, a duty to perform.

Page 136, l. 34. the return of our representatives from Berlin. This refers to the Congress of Berlin, 1878, which settled the affairs of the Balkans after the Russian-Turkish war. Lord Salisbury was the chief English representative.

Page 138, l. 24. the man of blood. King David, the traditional author of many of the Psalms, described himself thus because he had waged so many wars.

Page 138, l. 25. Alfred de Musset, a Parisian author (1810-1857). "Carmosine" and "Fantasio" are his best comedies.

Page 139, l. 2. Flaubert (1821-1880), a French writer, noted for his style.

Page 139, l. 8. nine times heated. Nine is the traditional number for strength. Three is always the mystical number and nine is "thrice three."

Page 139, l. 12. out of the strong, etc. An old proverb. We find it in the Hebrew legend of Samson.

Page 140, l. 5. epileptically sensual. Epilepsy is often the result of immorality.

Page 140, l. 15. roll the subject, etc., as in tasting tea or wine.

Page 140, l. 31. our fine old sea-captain. Captain Marryat (1792-1848), the author of various novels of adventure dealing with ships and sailors.

Page 141, l. 5. *entrefilet*, an article inserted to fill up a gap between more lengthy pieces in a magazine or newspaper.

BOOKS WHICH HAVE INFLUENCED ME

Published in the *British Weekly*, May, 1887. Republished in "Later Essays," 1895.

Stevenson was ever a lover of books, though he proclaimed that they are "a mighty bloodless substitute for life." He enjoyed reading most, he tells us, when he was between twenty and twenty-three years old; "these are the years for reading," he says in a letter.

His biographer, Graham Balfour, found in a note-book a list of his favourite books; Montaigne's "Essays"; "Horace, his Odes"; "Pepys, his Diary"; Shakespeare, especially "Lear," "Hamlet," "Falstaff," "Twelfth Night"; Hazlitt's "Table Talk"; Burns' works; "Tristram Shandy"; Heine; Keats; Fielding. In his paper on "The Ideal House," he imagines the passages of the house lined with books, and in "the little room for winter evenings" he would have "a table for the books of the year; and close in a corner the three shelves full of eternal books that never weary: Shakespeare, Molière, Montaigne, Lamb, Sterne, De Musset's comedies (the one volume open at 'Carmosine' and the other at 'Fantasio'); the 'Arabian Nights,' and kindred stories, in Weber's solemn volumes; Borrow's 'Bible in Spain,' the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' 'Guy Mannering,' and 'Rob Roy,' 'Monte Cristo,' and the 'Vicomte de Bragelonne,' immortal Boswell sole among biographers, Chaucer, Herrick, and the "State Trials.'"

Page 143, l. 15. **Nothing has ever moved.** The Shakespearean critic, Edward Dowden, in a letter of 1876, bears similar witness to the power of acting. "I steadfastly believe in the magnificent and overpowering effect which an actor of great genius may produce. Single moments have revealed to me, beyond all doubt, the reality of such power, and it is proved by history. But such great actors are as rare, perhaps, as great poets."

Page 143, l. 23. **D'Artagnan.** One of the "Three Musketeers," in the novel of Alexandre Dumas, the elder. He appears again in the "Vicomte de Bragelonne," a later novel of Dumas.

Page 143, l. 26. **pedant in morals.** Such a man might dislike some of the sayings and doings of D'Artagnan, which are not as strictly moral sometimes as they might be.

Page 143, l. 28. **Pilgrim's Progress,** by John Bunyan (1678).

Page 144, l. 5. **Montaigne.** See note on "A Night among the Pines."

Page 144, l. 9. **linen decencies,** i.e. the conventional ideas of respectable behaviour. Fine linen is a mark of respectability.

Page 144, l. 23. **droningly,** as it is so often read out in churches.

Page 144, l. 28. **Whitman.** Walt or Walter Whitman, an American poet (1819-1892). The first edition of "Leaves of Grass," containing twelve poems, appeared in 1855. The keynote of his poetry may be found in the "Song of Myself."

"I loafe and invite my soul,

I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass. . . .

Creeds and schools in abeyance,

Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,

I harbour for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,

Nature without check with original energy."

Page 145, l. 3. **gunpowder charges of the truth,** etc. Hence come those "educational suppressions" which Stevenson mentions in the previous paper.

Page 145, l. 18. **Herbert Spencer** (1820-1903), a philosopher. He

applied the evolutionary theory of Darwin to society and ethics; he is the chief exponent of the school of "biological ethics."

Page 145, l. 26. **caput-mortuum**, "dead head"; chemical term for the residuum of any substance after distillation or sublimation. It is applied to anything which has lost the attributes which made it valuable.

Page 145, l. 31. **Lewes**. G. H. Lewes (1817-1878), a writer on many subjects. His life of the German poet and philosopher, Goethe, was published in 1855.

Page 146, l. 2. **Werther**. "To-day," says Guizot, "man has enormous desires, but a weak will." This is the theme of Goethe's book. Werther, the hero of it, desires a full life and meets with disappointments. "Disgusted with the world—unsatisfied in his cravings—he dies by his own hand." In writing the book Goethe drew on his own experience and the history of one of his friends, a young man named Jerusalem, who killed himself under distressing circumstances. Stevenson dislikes this introduction of a friend's tragedy into Goethe's book.

Page 146, l. 3. **pen-and-ink Napoleon**. Goethe was a literary genius far above his contemporaries, just as Napoleon was a military and political genius far above his. He had a high ideal of literature and sacrificed his friends too often in its cause, just as the Spanish inquisitor in the zeal for his religion was cruel and pitiless.

Page 146, l. 5. **Inquisition**. A court of inquiry into offences against the Roman Catholic religion, established by Pope Gregory IX. in 1235. The inquisition was especially active in Spain. The trials were conducted in secret, and torture was employed with ruthless cruelty.

Page 146, l. 8. **Schiller** (1759-1805), a German poet and dramatist.

Page 146, l. 21. **Martial**, a Spaniard of the Roman Empire who came to Rome and wrote poetry in the time of Nero (68 A.D.).

Page 146, l. 32. **Marcus Aurelius**, the Roman Emperor and Stoic philosopher, 121-180 A.D. He wrote his "Golden Book" of his thoughts on life and conduct in Greek. The best English translation is that of Casaubon (1634).

Page 147, l. 14. **the silence**. Cf. Wordsworth's poem, "Song at the feast of Brougham Castle."

Page 147, l. 18. **Mill**. J. S. Mill (1806-1873), the utilitarian philosopher. In his "Autobiography" he speaks of the enduring value and charm of Wordsworth's poetry.

Page 147, l. 26. **"The Egoist"**. The best-known novel of George Meredith (1828-1909).

Page 147, l. 30. **a Nathan**. This refers to the story of David and the murder of Uriah. Nathan the prophet came afterwards to the king and told him a tale of injustice that made David exclaim, "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die." And Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man." Cf. Bible, 2 Samuel xii.

Page 148, l. 3. **mote and beam**. Cf. the Gospel of St. Matthew vii. "Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own

eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." The mote is, of course, very small, and the beam large. The point is that we can all detect faults in our friends, even when they do not exist, but are blind to our own greater faults.

Page 148, l. 10. Willoughby. The chief character, the "egoist" of the book.

Page 148, l. 18. Thoreau, an American writer (1817-1862). He has much the same ideals as Whitman—back to nature and the teachings of nature. See his book "Walden."

Page 148, l. 18. Hazlitt, essayist and critic (1778-1830). Cf. "Walking Tours."

Page 148, l. 20. Penn. William Penn (1644-1718), the Quaker. His best-known book is "No Cross, No Crown" (1668). He founded the Quaker colony in America; his ideal was toleration. Stevenson was fond of his "Fruits of Solitude."

Page 148, l. 22. Mitford, "Tales of Old Japan" (1871), by Algernon Freeman-Mitford, afterwards Lord Redesdale.

Page 148, l. 32. a free grace, a term borrowed from theology where it is applied to the gift of a naturally good will freely bestowed by God.

Page 149, l. 7. his reading of that dogma, i.e. his interpretation of it.

Page 149, l. 24. Not all men can read all books. Cf. Steele, "Tatler," No. 173 (1710), "I remember to have heard a great painter say, 'There are certain faces for certain painters, as well as certain subjects for certain poets.' This is as true in the choice of studies; and no one will ever relish an author thoroughly well, who would not have been fit company for that author, had they lived at the same time."

LETTER TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN.

Published in *Scribner's Magazine*, November, 1888. Republished with "Across the Plains," 1892.

Page 131, l. 4. verify his own existence. Compare the remarks in "An Apology for Idlers" on "a strong sense of personal identity."

Page 151, l. 13. cut-and-dry. The metaphor is from timber, cut, dried, and ready for use. Cf. Swift:

"Sets of phrases, cut and dry,
Evermore thy tongue supply."

Page 151, l. 29. ars artium, the "art of arts," i.e. a general taste for creative work of some kind; the "general vocation."

Page 151, l. 31. counterpoint, the rules in music for adding melody as accompaniment to melody already present.

Page 155, l. 9. the great emperor. Augustus, who allowed Virgil to continue in possession of his confiscated estate. Cf. Virgil, *Eclogue I*.

Page 155, l. 10. Apollo, the Greek god of art identified with the sun which is the source of life.

Page 155, l. 19. pot-boilers, a work of art, or book, produced merely to bring in money and not as a labour of love.

Page 155, l. 31. bourgeois, the ordinary citizen of the middle-class.

Page 155, l. 35. transcendental honesty, ideal honesty. It is easy enough to be honest in the ordinary sense; a superior kind of honesty, honesty to the highest ideals of art, is required of the artist.

Page 156, l. 26. Tennyson accepted a peerage in 1883. He regarded this personal distinction as a compliment to art and an acknowledgment of its value to the community.

Page 156, l. 28. Lawrence (1811-1879) was Viceroy of India.

Page 156, l. 29. Cairns (1819-1885), a great lawyer; Lord Chancellor of England.

Page 156, l. 29. Clyde (1792-1863), better known in India as Sir Colin Campbell.

Page 157, l. 7. the devil in, etc., i.e. the worst thing that can happen to a man in this trade of pleasing is to fail to please.

Page 157, l. 28. booth where, like a showman, he exhibits his attempts to please. The artist is still compared with the tradesman or provider of public entertainment.

Page 157, l. 32. wreckers of the press, i.e. the critics.

Page 158, l. 2. "Les Blancs et les Bleus," a late novel of the elder Dumas, just as "Castle Dangerous" is a late work of Scott written when his powers were failing.

Page 158, l. 6. Ham. See the Book of the Genesis, chap. ix. (Bible) for the story of this son of Noah.

Page 158, l. 8. Lockhart (1794-1854) married a daughter of Sir Walter Scott and wrote his biography, one of the best in the English language.

Page 158, l. 20. Montépin, a French writer of serial stories very popular among the lower orders of Paris.

Page 158, l. 27. nervous output, all creative art entails a great strain on the nerves.

Page 158, l. 32. the hire of the field labourer. See the parable of the labourers who were hired at different hours of the day for work in a vineyard and received all the same wages. Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter xx.

Page 159, l. 3. Millet, a famous French painter (1814-1875).

Page 159, l. 9. le vieux saltimbanque, the old mountebank. Cf. "he shall sit by his deserted booth ashamed."

Page 159, l. 10. when the butcher, etc., i.e. asking for his bill to be paid.

Page 159, l. 23. débutant artist, the artist just entering on his career.

Page 159, l. 33. esoteric journals, i.e. journals that cater for a small and select class of readers.

LAY MORALS

I

These notes on ethics were written in March, 1879. Stevenson worked at them again in 1883 and 1884, but reverted to the original draft, which was published with his "Juvenilia" in 1896.

In a letter to his father he writes of "Lay Morals" as follows: "a sketch of some of the more obvious provinces and truths of life for the use of young men. The difficulty and delicacy of the task cannot be exaggerated. Here is a fine opportunity to pray for me; that I may lead none into evil. I am shy of it; yet remembering how easy it would have been to help my dear Walter and me, had any one gone the right way about, spurs me to attempt it. I will try to be honest, and then there can be no harm, I am assured; but I say again: a fine opportunity to pray for me. Lord, defend me from all idle opportunity, to please the face of man; from all display, to catch applause; from all bias of my own evil; in the name of Christ. Amen."

Such was the spirit in which Stevenson wrote the "Lay Morals." They preserve, more than any of his writings, so his friends tell us, the qualities of his conversation; in them we are brought very close to the real Stevenson.

His discourse, if so we may call it, is grounded on an examination of the popular interpretation of those rules of conduct handed down by the Jews and adopted by the Christian Church, known as the "Decalogue," the ten laws proclaimed, as the Jews asserted, by God to Moses upon Mount Sinai. They will be found in the xxth chapter of the Book of the "Exodus" in the Bible, and in the Book of Common Prayer. The eighth commandment, to which Stevenson especially refers, is the apparently simple order, "Thou shalt not steal." In the passage given here he shows how difficult it is to carry out really the spirit of that commandment. "The young man" whose experience he relates is, of course, himself, and the passage is valuable as a piece of autobiography very sincere and intimate.

Page 160, l. 19. evading of the police, the mere negative morality of avoiding any offence against the laws of the state which the police enforce.

Page 161, l. 11. At college. This refers to his student days at Edinburgh.

Page 161, l. 15. of a conversible temper. Cf. "Talk and Talkers," for Stevenson's appreciation of the delights and uses of conversation.

Page 162, l. 6. creature of the back-stairs of Fortune, one who has no right, by his own merit, to good fortune. The metaphor is taken from a man who has no claim upon a great man, but bribes a servant to let him in by a back-entrance, trusting on his own power of pleading to get what he wants at the interview once that is secured to him.

Page 162, l. 23. trumpeting, like an elephant enraged.

Page 162, l. 35. more favourable climate. This refers to his visit to Switzerland and afterwards to the South of France. Cf. the essay "Ordered South" in "Virginibus Puerisque."

Page 163, l. 12. Joan of Arc, burned at the stake in Rouen, May 30, 1431, as a heretic and witch. Cauchon, the ex-bishop of Beauvais, was instrumental in procuring her condemnation, and Bedford commanded the English forces.

Page 163, l. 17. Pilate, who admitted that he saw no fault in Christ but feared the political agitation of the Jews. Cf. Gospel of St. John xviii. and xix.

Page 164, l. 15. curious, careful, anxious.

Page 164, l. 33. a sort of blindness, i.e. we are apt to think in terms of money.

Page 166, l. 6. paymaster on parole, i.e. he has to take your word for it that he is getting what he pays for.

Page 167, l. 4. Mrs. Grundy was originally a character in a play, Morton's "Speed the Plough." A Mrs. Ashfield, the wife of a farmer, is jealous of her neighbour, Mrs. Grundy, and her husband tells her, "Be quiet, will you? Always ding, dinging Dame Grundy into my ears! What will Mrs. Grundy say? What will Mrs. Grundy think?" Hence, the term is now applied as a figure for conventional public opinion.

Page 167, l. 27. richer, in humour.

II

In this section Stevenson considers a man's duty towards society. He has been speaking before of a man in relation to himself; now he speaks of him in relation to others. He has been speaking of "self-dictation." There is, in other words, in every man something which we call the soul, a "permanence which abides through the vicissitudes of passion, now overwhelmed and now triumphant, now unconscious of itself in the immediate distress of appetite or pain, now rising unclouded above all. So, to the man, his own central self fades and grows clear again amid the tumult of the senses." "What is this utterance of your inmost self when, in a quiet hour, it can be heard intelligibly? It is something beyond the compass of your thinking, inasmuch as it is yourself; but is it not of a higher spirit than you had dreamed betweenwhiles, and erect above all base considerations?" This is the self to whose commands we should, says Stevenson, listen on every occasion of doubt and perplexity in conduct. But its dictation is, he goes on here to tell us, not continuous. We must depend sometimes on practical considerations. Hence the following discussion.

Page 169, l. 29. He may have gained, etc. Cf. Gospel of St. Matthew xvi. 26, "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Page 170, l. 31. Midas, according to Greek legend, was a king of Phrygia who prayed to the gods that every thing he touched might turn to gold.

Page 171, l. 34. lion's share. Cf. the fable of Aesop where the lion went hunting with other animals and claimed as his share of the

spoil three-quarters ; as for the fourth, he said, " let who will dispute it with me."

Page 171, l. 35. **sleeping partner**, i.e. one who shares in the profits but takes no part in the working of the business.

Page 172, l. 12. **better to be a living book**. Cf. Milton : " Apology for Smectymnuus." " He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem."

Page 172, l. 24. **St. Paul**. Many of the world's great thinkers worked with their hands ; St. Paul as a tent-maker, Socrates as a sculptor, Bunyan as a tinker, Kabir as a weaver.

Page 174, l. 15. **like Whittington**, a Lord Mayor of London in the beginning of the fifteenth century. He became very rich, but, according to the popular story, came to London penniless.

Page 174, l. 32. **short of inspiration**, i.e. except by the grace of God.

Page 175, l. 3. " It is easier, etc." Cf. Gospel of St. Matthew xix. 24.

Page 175, l. 7. **Greatheart**, a character in Bunyan's " Pilgrim's Progress " who guided Christian's wife and his children to the Celestial City. Here used for the parish priest.

Page 175, l. 21. **copy-book** in which various moral maxims are written for the school-boy to copy out as he learns to write.

Page 177, l. 7. **fixed design of righteousness**. Cf. a previous passage in " Lay Morals " : " What is right is that for which a man's central self is ever ready to sacrifice immediate or distant interests ; what is wrong is what the central self discards or rejects as incompatible with the fixed design of righteousness."

Page 177, l. 25. **after meat**, i.e. after a meal. We are, as it were, overfed with luxuries.

Page 178, l. 12. **Benjamin Franklin** (1706-1790), an American writer who worked his way up from poverty, and inculcated in his books thrift and prudence. His attitude towards life is the direct antithesis of that represented by Stevenson in " An Apology for Idlers."

Page 178, l. 31. **anything I buy, etc.** Cf. the maxim of Ruskin that you should never buy anything unless you know it to be useful or believe it to be beautiful.

Page 179, l. 1. **ropes of sand**, a metaphor for an impossible task.

Page 179, l. 6. **dog in the manger**, another popular saying, derived from the fable that a dog sat in a manger and would not let the ox eat the hay though he could not eat it himself.

A CHRISTMAS SERMON

Published in *Scribner's Magazine*, December, 1888. Republished with " Across the Plains," 1892.

In 1888 Stevenson contributed a series of twelve articles to *Scribner's Magazine*. This was the last of the series.

Page 181, l. 3. **sands run out**. A metaphor from the sand hour-glass.

Page 181, l. 9. **Tacitus**, the Roman historian, of the second century A.D. In his "Annals" he records the campaigns of the Roman general, Germanicus Caesar, in Germany.

Page 181, l. 14. **Sunt lacrymae rerum**, a quotation from the Roman poet Virgil. "There is a sense of tears in human things."

Page 181, l. 15. **Simeon**. Cf. Gospel of St. Luke ii. 25. At the time of the birth of Christ there was an old man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, just and devout. It was revealed to him "that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." So when he saw the infant Christ he gave utterance to his gratitude in a song, beginning, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word."

Page 182, l. 2. **but a transcendental way**, etc., i.e. only another, if more subtle, way.

Page 182, l. 30. **the Fox without the Tail**, a reference to the old fable of the fox who, having lost his tail in a trap, tried to persuade the other foxes to bite theirs off too.

Page 183, l. 4. **clearing of the decks**, the preliminary on a ship of war to engaging the enemy in a fight.

Page 183, l. 7. **total abstainer**, i.e. from all alcoholic liquor.

Page 183, l. 21. **inconsequential**, unimportant, not bringing with it great results.

Page 183, l. 28. **Gordian knots**. Gordius, a peasant, was made King of Phrygia. He dedicated his old waggon to Jupiter and tied up the beam of it in a knot which nobody could untie. Alexander was shown the knot and told that whoever succeeded in untying it would rule over Asia. Alexander speedily cut the knot with his sword. A "Gordian knot" means, therefore, a great difficulty.

Page 183, l. 34. **without capitulation**, i.e. on honourable terms. He shall not make friends by flattery, nor by condoning the misdeeds of others. "He that feareth the Lord directeth his friendship aright."

Page 184, l. 22. **this fashion of the smiling face**. Christmas is traditionally a time of joy and goodwill, but

"often glad no more,
We wear a face of joy, because
We have been glad of yore."

Page 184, l. 28. **enter the kingdom of heaven maim**. Cf. Gospel of St. Matthew xviii. 8. "If thy hand or thy foot cause thee to offend, cut them off and cast them from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire."

Stevenson means that asceticism should not embitter the character. If for our discipline we must be ascetic in some form, we must remember that discipline is a means, not an end. If it fails as a means, it has no virtue in itself.

Page 184, l. 35. **carpet interests**, i.e. petty, personal interests, that do not extend beyond the carpet of our own room, as it were.

Page 185, l. 5. **Pharisee**, that sect of the Jews which laid great stress on the observance of rites and ceremonies.

Page 185, l. 6. away with, tolerate.

Page 185, l. 22. poisoner of family life, i.e. one who by his ill-temper spoils life for his family.

Page 185, l. 29. Reverend Mr. Zola. Zola was a contemporary French novelist noted for his realistic treatment of those aspects of life which most people think it better not to use as material for art. But he believed that if the reader were shown the hideousness of vice vividly he would abhor it and avoid it. Stevenson calls the preacher of the realistic "sermon against lust" an ecclesiastical Zola, but implies that his interest is really in the vice, not in the reformation of the vicious.

Page 186, l. 15. canting moralists. Those who repeat such phrases as "Be good and you will be happy" without considering whether they are true.

Page 186, l. 32. *capitis diminutio*, a Roman law term for the "loss of civic rights" either in a greater degree, by execution, or in a minor, by disfranchisement, as a punishment for offences.

Page 186, l. 33. social ostracism. In the Greek city states when there was a conflict between political parties and it seemed expedient that the leader of one side or the other should leave the state for the sake of the public peace, the people voted as to which leader should go into exile. They recorded their votes on an "ostrakon" or "potsherd."

Stevenson means that a man may avoid legal penalties but incur the dislike of society and consequently find himself "sent to Coventry."

Page 187, l. 20. our cheek, etc. Cf. St. Matthew v. 39. "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Page 187, l. 26. Revenge. Cf. Bacon's Essays, "Of Revenge" (IV.).

Page 187, l. 28. insane judge, i.e. our mind is, at the time, enraged—unbalanced.

Page 189, l. 10. Paul, the Pharisee who became a Christian and preached the religion in spite of all kinds of persecution.

Page 189, l. 15. Give him a march. Cf. the closing scene of "Hamlet":

"for his passage,
The soldier's music and the rites of war
Speak loudly for him."

Page 189, l. 19. a recent book of verse, by W. E. Henley (1888). He was a keen friend of Stevenson and collaborated with him in "Deacon Brodie."